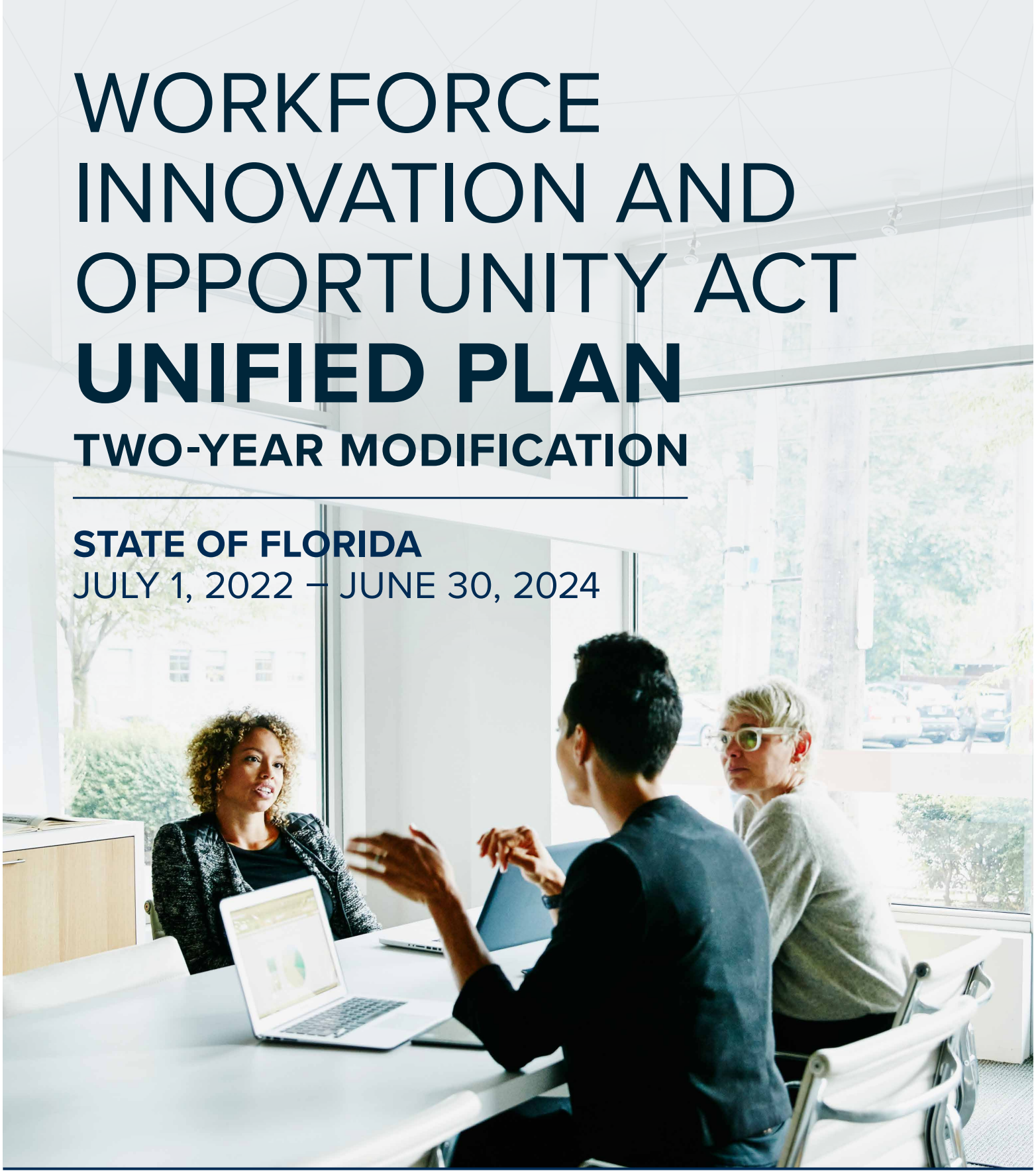
WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT **UNIFIED PLAN**

TWO-YEAR MODIFICATION

STATE OF FLORIDA

JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2024



CareerSource FLORIDA

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION fldoe.org

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURE INDEX iv
ACRONYM GUIDE vi
I. WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1
PLAN INTRODUCTION 2
II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS 4
(a) Economic, Workforce and Workforce Development Activities Analysis 4
(b) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities 62
(c) State Workforce Development Capacity 63
(d) State Strategic Vision and Goals 65
(e) State Strategy 67
III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS 89
(a) State Strategy Implementation 89
(b) State Operating Systems and Policies 116
IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS 161
V. COMMON ASSURANCES 168
(a) General Requirements 170
(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements 180
(c) Youth Program Requirements 185
(d) Single-area State Requirements 187
TITLE I-B ASSURANCES 188
VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM 189
(a) Employment Service Professional Staff Development 189
(b) Assistance in Unemployment Compensation Claims Through Career Centers 190
(c) Assistance to Unemployment Insurance Claimants and Other Unemployed Individuals 190
(d) Wagner-Peyser Funds to Support UI Claimants 192
WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES 206
VIII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS 207
(a) Aligning of Content Standards 207
(b) Local Activities 208
(c) Corrections Education and Other Education of Institutionalized Individuals 215
(d) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program 215
(e) State Leadership 216
(f) Assessing Quality 219
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES 222

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IX. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION 225
(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council 225
(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness 229
(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System 229
(d) Coordination with Education Officials 232
(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations 238
(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services 239
(g) Executive Order 13-284 239
(h) Coordination with Employers 241
(i) Interagency Cooperation 243
(j) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development 245
(k) Statewide Assessment 252
(l) Annual Estimates 256
(m) State Goals and Priorities 257
(n) Order of Selection 260
(o) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds 262
(p) State's Strategies 265
(q) Evaluation and Reports of Progress 272
(r) Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services 287
X. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – FLORIDA DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES 293
(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council 293
(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness 294
(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System 295
(d) Coordination with Education Officials 296
(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations 299
(h) Interagency Cooperation 302
(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development 303
(j) Statewide Assessment 310
(k) Annual Estimates 313
(l) State Goals and Priorities 313
(m) Order of Selection 314
(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds 314
(o) State's Strategies 315
(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress 317
(q) Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services 331
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS & ASSURANCES 333
APPENDIX 1 – PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS 342

FIGURE INDEX

Section II

Figure 2.01 Florida – Total Population

Figure 2.02 Florida's Labor Force and Employment (Seasonally Adjusted)

Figure 2.03 Labor Force Participation Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)

Figure 2.04 Unemployment Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)

Figure 2.05 Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates by Age and Gender

Figure 2.06 Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates by Age and Race/Ethnicity

Figure 2.07 Florida Job Openings, Hires, and Quits (Seasonally Adjusted)

Figure 2.08 Florida Education and Health Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.09 Florida Education Levels (Ages 25 and Above)

Figure 2.10 Projected Growth in Labor Demand by Level of Education, 2021-2029

Figure 2.11 Florida Weekly Earnings with Certificates or Licenses (Ages 25 and Above)

Figure 2.12 COVID-19 Pandemic Impact and Recovery by Industry

Figure 2.13 Change in Percent Share of Florida Industry Sectors February 2020 – September 2021 (Seasonally Adjusted)

Figure 2.14 Florida Construction Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.15 Florida Manufacturing Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.16 Florida Trade, Transportation and Utilities Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.17 Florida Information Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.18 Florida Financial Activities Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.19 Florida Professional and Business Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.20 Florida Education and Health Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.21 Florida Leisure and Hospitality Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.22 Florida Other Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.23 Florida Government Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

Figure 2.24 Top Emerging Industries

Figure 2.25 Industries Gaining the Most Total Jobs

Figure 2.26 Percent Distribution of Employment in Florida by Major Occupational Group

Figure 2.27 Local Workforce Area with Largest Share of Employment, by Occupational Group

Figure 2.28 Location Quotients of Occupational Groups in Florida by LWDA

Figure 2.29 Top 15 Existing Demand Occupations in Florida

Figure 2.30 Top 20 Emerging Occupations in Florida

Figure 2.31 Emerging Occupations Top Knowledge Scores

Figure 2.32 Emerging Occupations Top Technology Skills

Figure 2.33 Occupations Projected to Gain the Most New Jobs in Florida

Figure 2.34 Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Knowledge Scores

Figure 2.35 Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Technology Skills

Figure 2.36 Fastest Growing Occupations in Florida (Minimum 4,000 Jobs in 2021)

Figure 2.37 Rapid Growth Occupations Top Knowledge Scores

Figure 2.38 Rapid Growth Occupational Top Technology Skills

Figure 2.39 Declining or Slow-Growth Occupations in Florida

Section III

Figure 3.01 CareerSource Florida Board Governance

Figure 3.02 Policy Development Framework

Figure 3.03 CareerSource Florida, Inc. Organizational Chart

Figure 3.04 Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Organizational Chart

Figure 3.05 Florida's Workforce System Organization

Figure 3.06 Florida Department of Education Organizational Chart

Figure 3.07 Division of Career and Adult Education Organizational Chart Bureau of Adult Education

FIGURE INDEX

Figure 3.08 Division of Career and Adult Education Bureau of Adult Education Organizational Chart

Figure 3.09 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Organizational Chart

Figure 3.10 Division of Blind Services Organizational Chart

Figure 3.11 CareerSource Florida Board of Directors Membership Roster as of September 2022

Figure 3.12 2020-2021 WIOA Participants/Exiters

Figure 3.13 2019-2020 WIOA Participants/Exiters

Figure 3.14 State WIOA Statewide Primary Indicators of Performance Program Year 2020-2021

Figure 3.15 Local Workforce Development Board WIOA Performance Program Year 2020-21

Figure 3.16 Florida Primary Indicators of Performance Goals Program Year 2020-2021

Figure 3.17 Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Federal Performance Indicators and Targets

Figure 3.18 Florida Adult Education State Targets Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education

Figure 3.19 Florida Adult Education State Targets English for Speakers of Other Languages

Figure 3.20 Distribution of Dislocated Worker Funding Percentages

Section VI

Figure 6.01 CareerSource Florida Network Map

Section VII

Figure 7.01 Florida's Top Major Labor-Intensive Crop Activity

Figure 7.02 MSFW Significant/Bilingual Office Locations

Section VIII

Figure 8.01 Adult General Education Programs and Courses

Section IX

Figure 9.01 VR Personnel and Projected Staffing Needs

Figure 9.02 Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education

Figure 9.03 Projected Number of Eligible Individuals to Receive VR Services

Figure 9.04 Projected Outcome and Service Goals and Time Frames for Federal Fiscal Year 2021-22

Figure 9.05 Federal Standards and Indicators

Figure 9.06 WIOA Performance Indicators

Section X

Figure 10.01 Personnel Employed by FDBS

Figure 10.02 FDBS Counselor to Client Ratio

Figure 10.03 Personnel Serving FDBS Vocational Rehabilitation Clients: Vacancy Information

Figure 10.04 FDBS Personnel Standards by Position State Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Figure 10.05 FDBS Personnel with Recognized Credentials SFY 2021

Figure 10.06 Individuals Served by Supported Employment Programs 2019-2021

Figure 10.07 Clients Served by Service Category

Figure 10.08 Change in Number of Clients Served in Minority Groups

Figure 10.9 FDBS Performance Standards and Indicators

Figure 10.10 Outcomes in Business Enterprise Program

Figure 10.11 FDBS Training Offered in 2021

Figure 10.12 Performance Standards and Indicators

Figure 10.13 Additional Standards Outlined in FDBS's Long-Range Program Plan

Figure 10.14 FRCB Expenses

ACRONYM GUIDE

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AEPIP	Adult Education Program Improvement Plan
AOP	Agricultural Outreach Plan
APD	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
ASE	Adult Secondary Education
AWARE	Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting
BBE	Bureau of Business Enterprise
BEESS	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CASAS	Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System
CBTAC	Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultant
CCRS	College & Career Readiness Standards
CEU	Continuing Education Units
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CRC	Certified Rehabilitation Counselors
CRP	Community Rehabilitation Provider
CSNA	Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
DCAE	Division of Career and Adult Education
DEO	Department of Economic Opportunity
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
DPN	Disability Program Navigator
DROP	Deferred Retirement Option Program
DVOP	Disabled Veteran Outreach Program
EN	Employment Networks
EPS	Employment Placement Specialist
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
FAAST	Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education
FDBS	Florida Division of Blind Services
FDOE	Florida Department of Education
FETPIP	Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FRC	Florida Rehabilitation Council

FRCB	Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
ITA	Individual Training Accounts
IWT	Incumbent Worker Training
JVA	Jobs for Veterans Act
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant
KSAs	Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
LEA	Local Education Agency
LMS	Learning Management System
LVER	Local Veterans' Employment Representative
LWDA	Local Workforce Development Area
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MDES	Mississippi Department of Employment Security
MIS	Management Information System
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
MSFW	Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers
NCSRC	National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils
NEG	National Emergency Grant
NFJP	National Farmworker Jobs Program
NRS	National Reporting System
O*Net	Occupational Information Network
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
OCTAE	Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education (USDOE)
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OOS	Order of Selection
PFM	Performance Funding Model
PY	Program Year
QRT	Quick Response Training
RA	Reemployment Assistance
REACH	Reimagining Education and Career Help
REACT	Reemployment and Emergency Assistance Coordination Team
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
RFA	Request for Application
RFP	Request for Proposal

RIMS	Rehabilitation Information Management System
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration (USDOE)
SBE	Significant Barriers to Employment
SE	Supported Employment
SFY	State Fiscal Year
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SRC	State Rehabilitation Council
SSA	Social Security Administration
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TAACCT	Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training
TABE	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TAP	Talent Acquisition Portal
TCA	Temporary Cash Assistance
TPCA	Third Party Cooperative Arrangements
TRADE	Transforming Resources for Accelerated Degrees and Employment
UCX	Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers
UI	Unemployment Insurance
USDOE	United States Department of Education
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VETS	Veterans Employment and Training Service
VR	Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WIPA	Work Incentives Planning and Assistance
WP	Wagner-Peyser Act
WPRS	Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services
WRIS	Wage Record Information System

I. WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(a) Florida submits its Unified State Plan Two-Year Modification which includes the following required programs:

- Adult Program
- Dislocated Worker Program
- Youth Program
- Wagner-Peyser Act
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program, including Blind Services Program

This Unified Plan Two-Year Modification submitted under WIOA includes required core partners: CareerSource Florida, the Department of Economic Opportunity, and the Department of Education's Divisions of Career and Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Blind Services.

The Florida Workforce Development System continues building on WIOA core and required partnerships including collaboration with the Florida College System, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the Community Services Block Grant Program, and the Department of Children and Families. Florida will collaborate with other organizations to identify opportunities for partnerships and system updates. This approach allows Florida to be deliberate and thorough in its strategic planning efforts across programs and to lay the foundation for combined planning.

PLAN INTRODUCTION

(b) As required by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and its commitment to providing a consumer-first workforce system, Florida continues to seek opportunities to improve outcomes, grow partnerships, and enhance customer service. States and LWDBs regularly revisit state plan strategies and recalibrate those strategies to respond to the changing economic conditions and workforce needs of the state (20 CFR, Unified and Combined Plans Under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, §676.135).

Florida's WIOA Unified Plan Two-Year Modification is consistent with the requirements of federal and state law with an emphasis on:

- **Streamlining services** – Florida's employment and training programs must be coordinated and consolidated at locally managed one-stop delivery system centers.
- **Empowering individuals** – Eligible participants will make informed decisions, choosing the qualified training program that best meets their needs.
- **Universal access** – Through a one-stop delivery system, every Floridian will have access to employment services.
- **Increased accountability** – The state, localities, and training providers will be held accountable for their performance.

Due to the strong leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, the state of Florida rebounded significantly from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 program year. Since Florida submitted its latest WIOA four-year plan, the unemployment rate improved 6.9 percentage points from 11.5% in July 2020 to 4.6% in October 2021. Eighteen consecutive months of job growth led to Florida recovering 89% of the jobs lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the labor force continued to grow throughout the year, adding 287,838 individuals by July 2021, and as of October 2021, Florida's labor force was reported at 10,590,000 – larger than it was in February 2020 (10,461,000).

The CareerSource Florida network remained open and available statewide to respond swiftly and identify opportunities to provide services to businesses and job seekers. Virtual services by phone, email, and technology-assisted appointments allowed our dedicated staff to continue providing reemployment assistance, host virtual and in-person job fairs, and launch new training programs with education providers. Over the 2020-2021 program year, Florida workforce development professionals assisted 96,293 job seekers who secured employment, including 5,800 veterans, and more than 53,700 businesses with recruiting, hiring and training needs.

In response to the United States Department of Labor's Training and Employment Notice 8-20, CareerSource Florida initiated a statewide self-assessment for LWDBs to analyze local operations and identify opportunities for increased or revised provision of services. Information gathered through this survey helped inform innovative statewide initiatives to enhance how LWDBs provide services to job seekers and businesses. These initiatives included policy revisions; data system improvements to enhance support to training providers and key partner programs; and the release of statewide resources to support the growing gig economy.

In 2021, Governor DeSantis signed Florida House Bill 1507, the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, into law. The REACH Act addresses the evolving needs of Florida's economy by increasing the level of collaboration and cooperation among state businesses and education communities while also improving training within, and equity and access to, a more integrated workforce and education system for all Floridians. Coupled with WIOA, the REACH Act fosters greater collaboration and integrated service delivery among key workforce partners including Florida's Department of Education (DOE), Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), and Department of Children and Families (DCF). Enhanced data sharing and leveraging of resources will increase positive employment and training outcomes for customers and fully realize the vision of WIOA for Floridians.

This WIOA Unified Plan Two-Year Modification identifies major changes in Florida's economic landscape and state-level changes to the administration of workforce programs across agencies implemented after 2020.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

(a) Economic, Workforce and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

(1) Economic and Workforce Analysis

(A) Economic Analysis

This section discusses indicators of Florida's economic, industry, and occupational profiles as they pertain to employment and workforce development. The first part (Part A: Workforce Analysis) provides an overview of Florida's general workforce situation, including labor force participation, unemployment, part-time/full-time status, job turnover, and education and training.

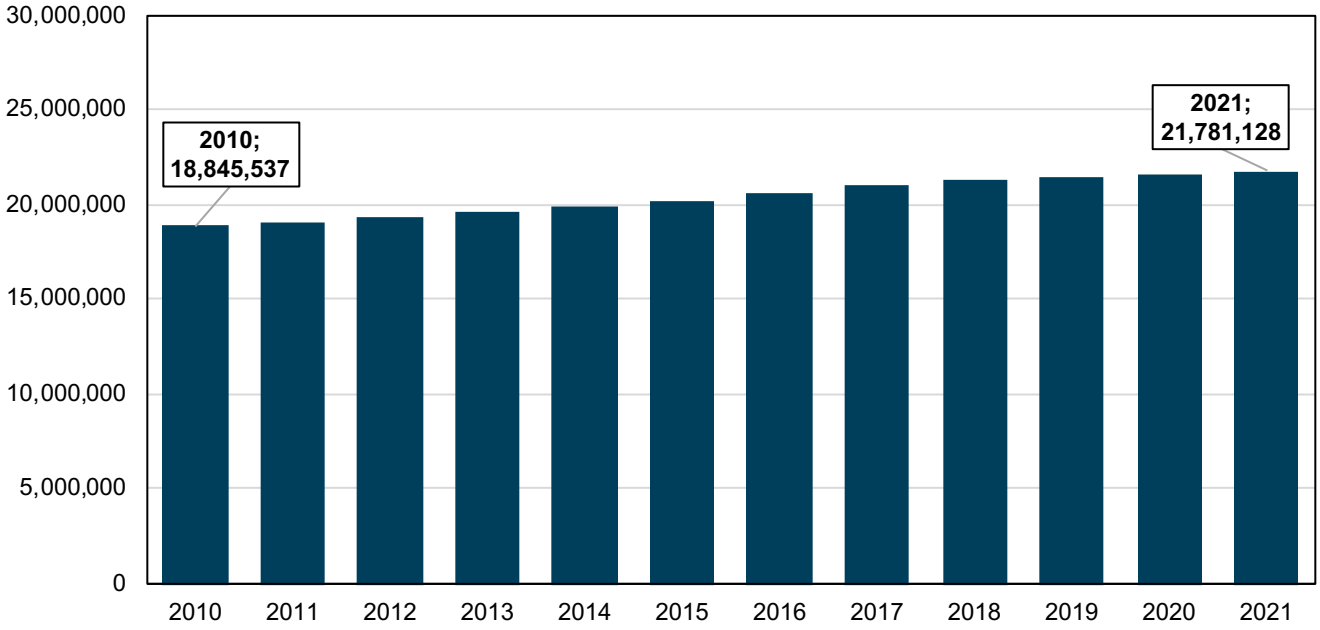
The parts that follow (Parts B and C) cover existing demand and projected trends in industries and occupations respectively. Industry is the type of activity conducted at a person's place of work, while occupation is the kind of work a person does. In other words, each worker is part of an industry and an occupation. Keeping that in mind, it is important to consider that occupations often cut across industries. For example, maids and housekeepers can be found in accommodation and food service industries, healthcare and social assistant, and administrative and support services, among other industries.

(A) Workforce Analysis

(i) Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment

Total Population
Florida's population has increased every year since 2010, a factor contributing to increases in both total demand for labor and labor supply over time. As of 2021, Florida's population has grown to 21,781,128 people.

Figure 2.01
Florida – Total Population

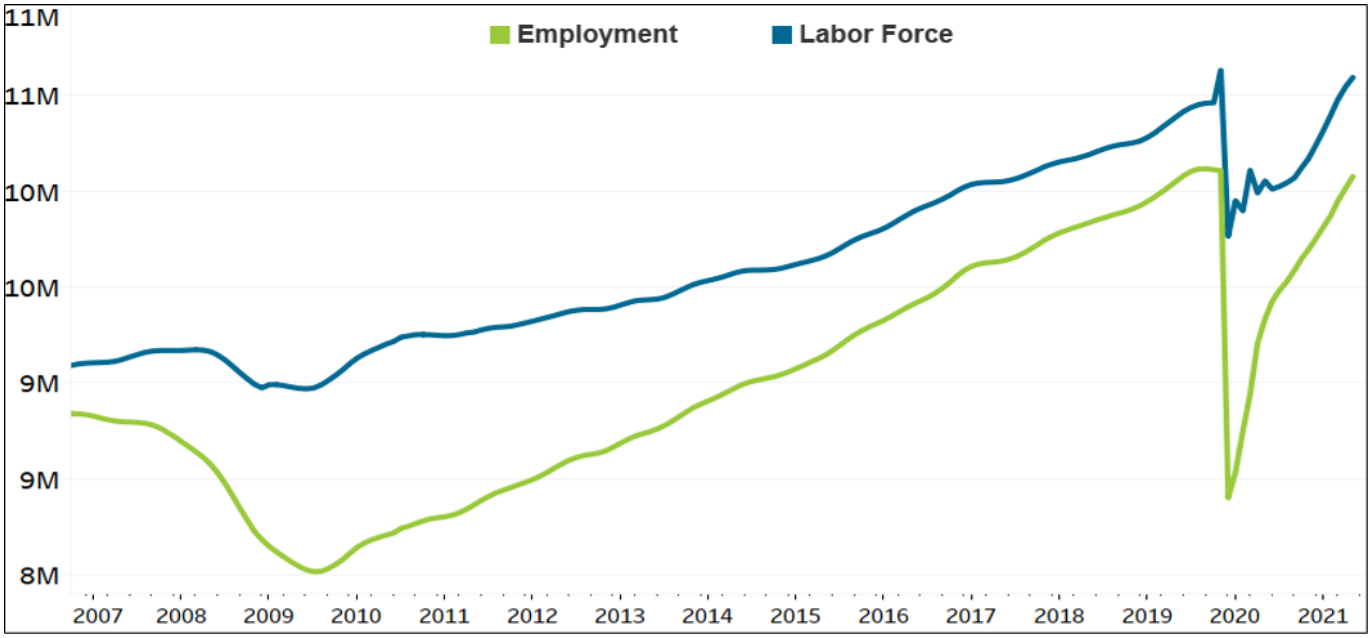


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Labor Force and Population

The labor force counts the number of residents who are either currently working or actively seeking and available to work, while employment counts only the number of those who are currently working. The labor force participation rate measures the number of people in the labor force as a percentage of all individuals potentially available for work, i.e., the total civilian noninstitutional population over the age of 16.

Figure 2.02
Florida's Labor Force and Employment (Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, September 2021.

During the Great Recession (the global economic downturn from 2007 to 2009 associated with the housing bubble collapse and resulting financial crisis), Florida's labor force decreased to a low of 8,969,000 in October 2009. Employment reached its low at 8,016,000 in November 2009. Since then, both labor force and total employment increased steadily until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic after February 2020.

Between February and April 2020, employment declined by 1,711,000. The labor force (including both employed and unemployed workers) declined by 696,000 in the same period, as many of those who lost employment left the labor force entirely.

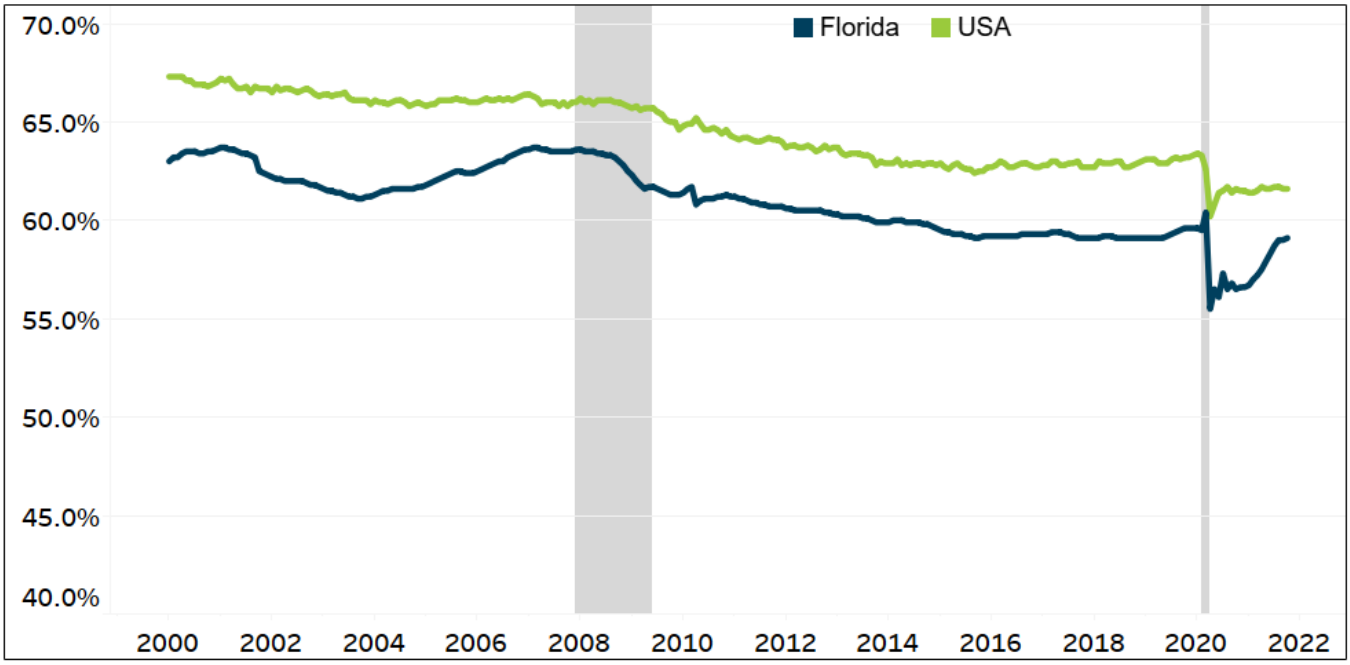
Since then, both measures have been increasing. In July of 2021 Florida's labor force surpassed the pre-pandemic labor force of February 2020, although employment remains below its pre-pandemic level. As of September 2021, there were 10,593,000 people in the labor force, with 10,076,000 of them employed (36,000 below the February 2020 level).

Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate is an estimate of the proportion of people in an economy who are contributing to its labor supply. It is calculated as the number of people ages 16 and over who are employed or actively seeking employment divided by the total noninstitutionalized, civilian working-age population.

As seen in the plot below, both Florida and national labor force participation rates have been declining for decades, and notably, Florida's participation rate has always been below the national rate. This is due to persistent differences in demographic composition between Florida and the nation as a whole. Florida has an older average population than the United States and a greater proportion of Florida's residents are retirees, who are by definition not included in the labor force. In Florida, the all-time high labor force participation rate of 63.7% was recorded in March 2007, while the national all-time high of 67.2 was recorded in March 2001.

Figure 2.03
Labor Force Participation Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, September 2021.

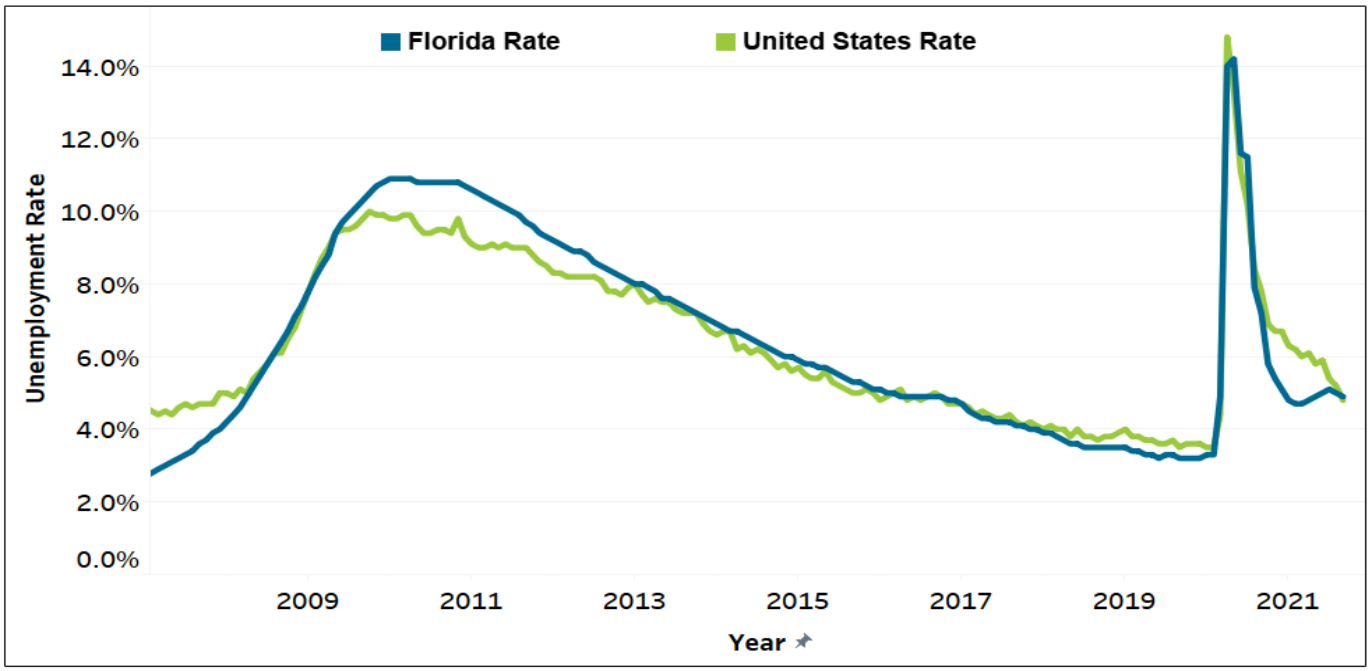
In February 2020, the state and national labor force participation rates were 59.5 % and 63.3% respectively. From February 2020 to April 2020, Florida's labor force participation rate declined by 5 percentage points, much greater than the national decline of 3 percentage points.

However, Florida has recovered more quickly in recent months. By September 2021, Florida's rate had returned to 59% (only 0.5 percentage points lower than February 2020), whereas the national rate was 61.6% (still 1.7 percentage points lower than February 2020).

Unemployment

The unemployment rate is the share of the labor force that is jobless and actively seeking work, expressed as a percentage of the total labor force.

Figure 2.04
Unemployment Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, September 2021.

During the Great Recession, Florida's unemployment rate reached a peak of 11.3 percent in January 2010, when there were 1,024,000 unemployed persons in the state. From the start of the Great Recession until 2017, the state unemployment rate trended slightly higher than the national rate. This relationship reversed in 2018, when Florida's unemployment rate fell below the national rate and remained there until June 2020. For 111 months from the end of the Great Recession to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the year-over-year percent change in unemployment was negative in every month.

The February 2020 seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.3 percent. Between February 2020 and May 2020, Florida's unemployment increased by 1,066,000 and the unemployment rate reached a new peak at 14.2%. (At the same time, the national unemployment rate peaked at 14.8% in April 2020). Florida's unemployment rate increased from a post-2008 low to a record high in just two months. The state unemployment rate ran below the national rate during most of the recovery, but in September 2021 they converged at 4.8%.

Demographic Impacts

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor force participation varied across demographic groups. Figures 2.05 and 2.06 compare changes in labor force participation and unemployment rates on an annual basis between 2019 and 2020 (latest data available) by age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

The age groups with the highest annual unemployment rates in 2020 were 16–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds (among both men and women). Unemployment among women ages 16-19 rose by 12.4 percentage points from 2019 and 2020, the most of any age group. The unemployment rate for women overall in 2020 was 9.1 percent compared to 8.3 percent for men. The gap between these rates is 0.8 percentage points, more than double the 0.3 percentage point gap between men and women in 2019.

Figure 2.05
Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates by Age and Gender

	Labor Force Participation Rate			Unemployment Rate		
	2019	2020	Difference	2019	2020	Difference
Female						
Age 16+	53.50%	51.30%	-2.20%	3.70%	9.10%	5.40%
Age 16-19	30.90%	27.50%	-3.40%	10.40%	22.80%	12.40%
Age 20-24	67.90%	61.50%	-6.40%	5.90%	12.20%	6.30%
Age 25-34	74.90%	74.90%	0.00%	3.70%	8.50%	4.80%
Age 35-44	75.50%	74.10%	-1.40%	2.30%	7.00%	4.70%
Age 45-54	74.50%	72.10%	-2.40%	2.50%	7.80%	5.30%
Age 55-64	58.20%	56.60%	-1.60%	2.30%	7.40%	5.10%
Age 65+	14.80%	12.70%	-2.10%	3.30%	6.90%	3.60%
Male						
Age 16+	65.20%	63.40%	-1.80%	3.40%	8.30%	4.90%
Age 16-19	30.10%	26.70%	-3.40%	15.20%	17.90%	2.70%
Age 20-24	68.30%	65.50%	-2.80%	7.60%	13.30%	5.70%
Age 25-34	89.00%	87.00%	-2.00%	2.70%	8.20%	5.50%
Age 35-44	90.30%	88.00%	-2.30%	1.90%	6.30%	4.40%
Age 45-54	86.10%	84.70%	-1.40%	2.30%	6.80%	4.50%
Age 55-64	70.40%	69.30%	-1.10%	1.70%	5.20%	3.50%
Age 65+	21.50%	21.30%	-0.20%	2.80%	8.20%	5.40%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research.

The 2020 annual unemployment rate among African Americans was 10.7 percent, followed by Hispanics at 9.2 percent, and Whites at 7.1 percent. Unemployment rose by 6.5 percentage points for Hispanics from 2019 to 2020, the largest increase among the three groups. Youth unemployment (categorized as ages 16-19) increased across all groups. African American youth unemployment was 29.0 percent, followed by 24.5 percent among Hispanics, and 18.0 among Whites.

Figure 2.06
Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates by Age and Race/Ethnicity

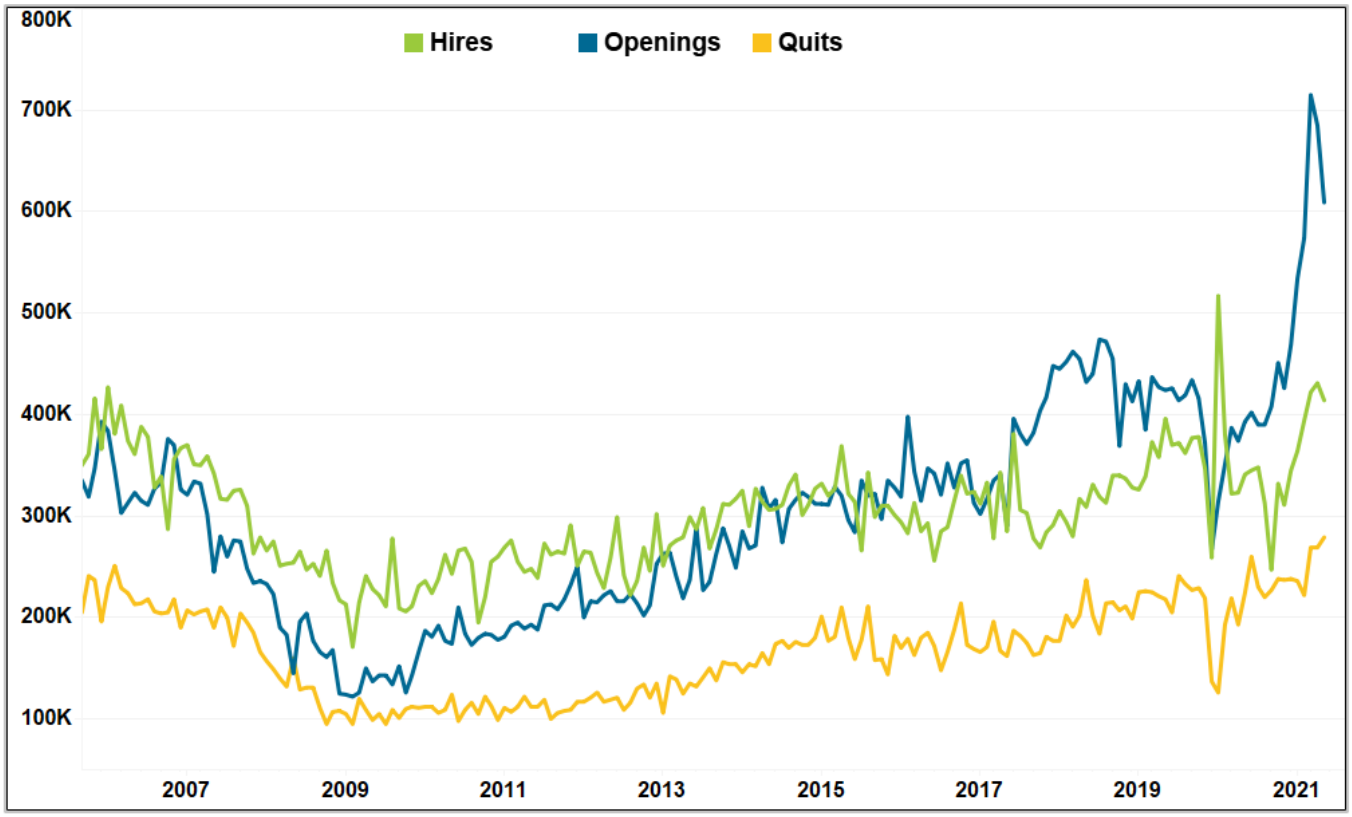
	Labor Force Participation Rate			Unemployment Rate		
	2019	2020	Difference	2019	2020	Difference
Hispanic						
Age 16-19	27.70%	22.10%	-5.60%	14.50%	24.50%	10.00%
Age 20+	67.80%	65.50%	-2.30%	2.70%	9.20%	6.50%
Black						
Age 16-19	29.30%	24.40%	-4.90%	22.60%	29.00%	6.40%
Age 20+	66.40%	64.20%	-2.20%	5.20%	10.70%	5.50%
White						
Age 16-19	31.20%	28.90%	-2.30%	11.50%	18.00%	6.50%
Age 20+	59.40%	57.30%	-2.10%	2.40%	7.10%	4.70%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research.

(ii) Labor Market Supply and Demand

Labor Market Turnover
Total job openings in Florida (which include all open/advertised positions) reached their lowest recent level in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic recession. During the recovery, the number of job openings in Florida reached an all-time high in July 2021 (715,000). Job openings remain elevated, at 609,000 openings in September 2021.

Figure 2.07
Florida Job Openings, Hires, and Quits (Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, JOLTS Experimental State Estimates, September 2021.

Monthly hires (all additions to employment payroll) have been more volatile since the COVID-19 pandemic began, fluctuating between a rehiring spike at 517,000 hires in May 2020 and a low of 247,000 hires in January 2021. Florida employers filled an estimated 414,000 jobs in September 2021.

Monthly job quits (voluntary separations) reached a six-year low of 126,000 in May 2020, but have since surged, reaching an all-time high of 279,000 in September. Elevated quits generally suggest that workers have an optimistic view of their alternative job prospects, while the elevated levels of openings, hires, and quits indicate generally high turnover in the post-pandemic labor market as employers reopen and prospective workers return to the labor force.

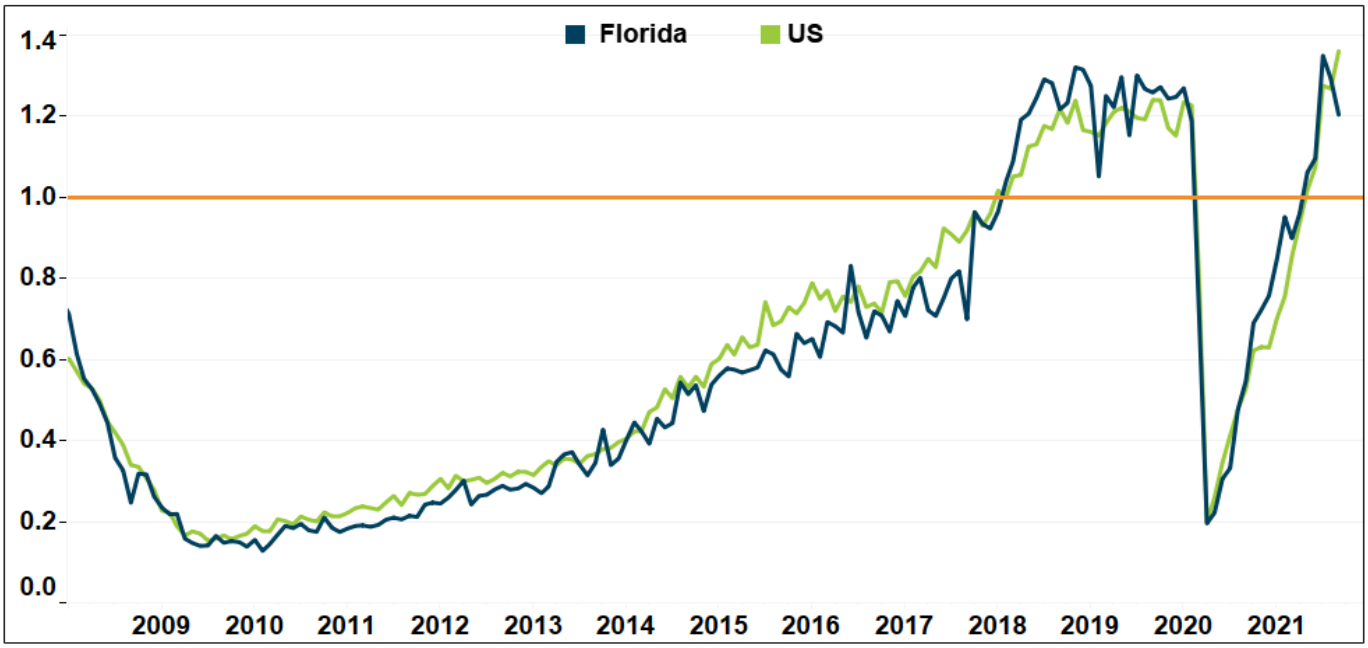
Labor Supply and Demand

Elevated job openings indicate high ongoing demand for workers. However, this does not in itself indicate whether demand is outpacing supply. As people who left the labor force during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to return to the labor force, the supply of available job seekers has also been replenishing in recent months.

One metric is to compare demand (the number of unfilled jobs) to supply (the number of active job seekers). When a region's economy enters a period of expansion, the number of unemployed people tends to fall while openings tend to increase, causing the number of job openings per job seeker to rise.

The number of job openings per job seeker has been rising since the end of the Great Recession, indicating a steadily tightening labor market. In February 2020, just before the pandemic, there were 1.19 job openings per unemployed Floridian. In April 2020, the measure reached an 8-year low of 0.20 openings per job seeker. It has now returned to pre-pandemic levels, at 1.20 openings per job seeker as of September 2021.

Figure 2.08
Job Openings per Job Seeker (Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, JOLTS Experimental State Estimates, September 2021. Analysis by Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research.

(iii) Education and Training

Educational Attainment

Many occupations have an educational requirement for employment. In 2019, 11.8% of Floridians aged 25 or older had less than a high school diploma or equivalent, while 88.2% had a high school education or higher., In total, f29.9% had a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree.

Figure 2.09
Florida Education Levels (Ages 25 and Above)

Less Than High School Graduate	High School Graduate and Equivalency	Some College or Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
1,767,583	4,276,237	4,450,224	2,827,938	1,643,763
11.8%	28.6%	29.7%	18.9%	11.0%

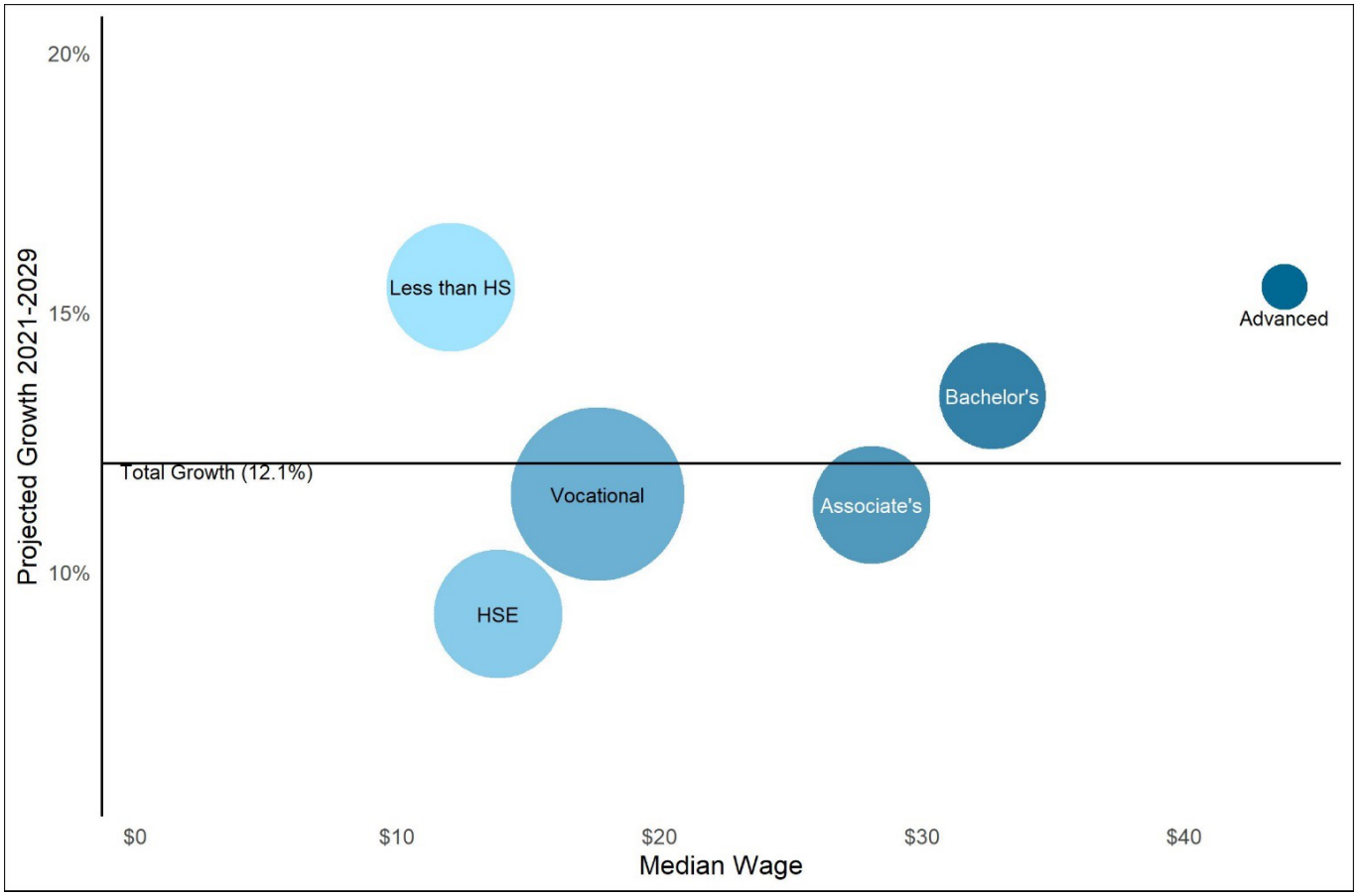
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Projected Changes in Educational Demand

Variation in growth rates across occupations are likely to lead to changes in the distribution of educational qualifications demanded by Florida's employers. Figure 2.10 shows the projected growth in the number of jobs requiring each given level of educational attainment. The size of each circle reflects total current employment in each category. Circles centered below the "All Jobs" line indicate that the category is projected to grow more slowly than employment as a whole and thus shrink as a share of labor demand. Those above the line are projected to grow faster than overall employment, increasing as a share of labor demand.

The projected shift in Florida's educational demand is polarized: the greatest rates of increase are in jobs requiring advanced (graduate or professional) degrees, and in jobs that do not require any educational credentials ("Less than High School"). Note that this analysis assumes that the educational requirements for any given occupation will not change over the time period modeled.

Figure 2.10
Projected Growth in Labor Demand by Level of Education, 2021-2029



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

Training

Certifications are issued by a non-governmental certification body and convey that an individual has the knowledge or skill to perform a specific job. A license is awarded by a government agency and conveys a legal authority to work in an occupation. Possession of a certificate or license usually commands a wage premium, generally ranging from 15% to 35% in Florida. Figure 2.11 displays median weekly earnings for full-time workers over age 25, with and without certifications.

Among all Floridians in this group, 27.1% have a certificate or license, with median weekly earnings of $1,008. This is 30% higher than the same measure for those without a certification ($774). That difference is reported in the table as the “wage premium”. The wage premium from certificates and licenses tends to be higher among older workers, and lower among female or black workers.

Figure 2.11
Florida Weekly Earnings with Certificates or Licenses (Ages 25 and Above)

	% With Certificate or License	Median Weekly Earnings for Full-time Wage & Salary Workers		
		Without Certificate or License	With Certificate or License	Wage Premium
Total Employed (over 25)	27.1%	$774	$1,008	30%
Age				
25 - 34	23.0%	$694	$859	24%
35 - 44	28.7%	$814	$1,010	24%
45 - 54	29.5%	$802	$1,085	35%
55 - 64	26.9%	$859	$1,094	27%
65 +	27.9%	$757	$1,245	64%
Sex				
Male	24.6%	$839	$1,132	35%
Female	30.0%	$708	$917	30%
Education				
Male (Non-Degree)	15.8%	$730	$858	18%
Male (Degree)	34.0%	$1,155	$1,378	19%
Female (Non-Degree)	16.8%	$599	$666	11%
Female (Degree)	41.2%	$905	$1,045	15%
Race				
White	27.4%	$806	$1,056	31%
Black or African American	25.7%	$657	$755	15%
Asian	28.7%	$944	$1,144	21%
Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity	22.3%	$677	$934	38%

Source: LMI Institute, State Certifications and Licenses Data Tables, 2019.

(iv) Individuals with Barriers to Employment

Individuals with Disabilities
According to the American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2019, approximately 10.1% (1.26 million) of Florida's total civilian noninstitutional population between the ages of 18 and 64 (12.51 million) has a disability.

Many persons with disabilities who reside in Florida are not in the labor force (756,860 not in the labor force; 506,265 in the labor force). The employment rate of people with disabilities in the above population was 36.1% in 2019. The estimated Florida unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 9.9% in 2019, compared to 10.4% for the same population in the U.S. as a whole, and 4.2% for Floridians with no disability. The Florida unemployment rate for persons with a disability decreased 1.9 percentage points from 2018 to 2019, while unemployment among those with no disability decreased 0.5 percentage points during that period.

According to the 2019 Census, there are 538,105 visually impaired persons in Florida, which is 2.5% of the total population. The estimated unemployment rate for Floridians who are blind or visually impaired was 7.9% in 2019, based on ACS data. The comparable figure for the same population in the U.S. as a whole was 8.5%. However, only 47.3% of the visually impaired population residing in Florida participated in the labor force in 2019, compared to 50.5% nationwide.

Veterans
Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation, with more than 1.4 million veterans (8.2 percent of the state's adult population), according to the 2019 population survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic (BLS), veterans comprise 5.9 percent of Florida's 2020 annual average of employed civilian labor force.

The post 9/11 GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation & Education Chapter 31 educational programs and the Transition Assistance Program, provide veterans additional opportunities, which improves and enhances the accreditation process for recently separated veterans in a variety of career fields. In addition, fees are waived for military personnel and their wives for more than 20 professions such as health profession licenses. These waivers amount to thousands of dollars in savings for individual veterans. Proposed state legislative action to permit the use of military training/schooling in lieu of in-state instruction would also, if enacted, enhance these benefits.

The inherent skills veterans develop during their military service, including leadership, a strong work ethic, teamwork, integrity, problem solving, technical skills, loyalty and a desire to succeed make them desirable to employers of any industry.

Nationally, veteran unemployment rates (non-seasonally adjusted) have trended lower than that of civilians. In 2019, the national veteran unemployment rate for veterans was 3.7 percent. The employment outlook for Florida's veterans is expected to be above that of their civilian counterparts.

Individuals Who Lack Education
In 2019, Florida established the Sail to 60 goal to increase the percentage of working age Floridians with a high-value, post-secondary certificate, degree, or training experience to 60% by 2030. Florida saw some of the largest increases in unemployment rate during the COVID-19 pandemic in youth and those with less than a high school diploma with both populations exceeding 12% unemployment and females aged 16-19 experiencing 22.8% unemployment.

Individuals Living in Poverty
In 2015, 15.7 percent of Floridians (3.1 million people) were in poverty according to the U.S. Census Bureau, a rate higher than the national poverty rate of 14.7 percent at that time. As of 2019, the poverty rate in Florida has declined to 12.7 percent (2.7 million people), although this is still higher than the 2019 national poverty rate of 12.3 percent.

Individuals with Other Barriers
Additional barriers to employment may include age, a criminal history, homelessness, long-term welfare dependence, childcare needs, background of poverty, transition from military to civilian workforce, poor work history, drug and alcohol addiction, no reliable transportation, mental illness, and employer bias to any of the above conditions.

A hidden barrier to pursuing employment and navigating career pathways for low-income individuals and their families is loss of social benefits for those in poverty. When wage increases result in loss of eligibility for social service benefits but are not sufficient for the family to assume the full cost of services independently, this is referred to as “benefits cliffs.”

When benefits cliffs occur, programs can inadvertently create disincentives for progression along a wage or career path necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency. A number of strategies can be employed to assist families in bridging these “benefit cliffs” including revising eligibility policies and identifying or creating financial supports for families who are no longer eligible for public assistance programs but are still in need of benefits. These strategies can eliminate or greatly reduce the “cliff effect” for social services that support children and families in poverty and can incentivize efforts to increase earnings and create a pathway to economic self-sufficiency. These elements may be woven into a set of strategies that invest in early learning, transportation, and access to services in rural communities.

Further integration and braiding of WIOA partner programs and resources could have the impact of reducing or eliminating the benefits cliff. An additional factor for consideration involves determining what career paths or occupations offer a path to self-sufficiency for low-income individuals and families on public benefits who may face these benefits cliffs.

(B) Industry Analysis

(i) Existing Demand by Industry

Nonagricultural Employment by Industry
An industry supersector is an aggregated grouping of employers that produce and provide similar goods and services. As of September 2021, the supersectors employing the most workers were primarily service-providing industries. Trade, Transportation and Utilities had the largest share of employment (1,807,100 jobs), followed by Professional and Business Services (1,428,900 jobs), Education and Health services (1,347,300 jobs) and Leisure and Hospitality (1,107,900 jobs). Leisure and Hospitality (+14.9 percent) and Other Services (+8.6 percent) were the fastest growing major industries over the year.

In September 2021, Florida had the third fastest over-the-year growth rate (+4.7%) in total nonagricultural employment among the 10 most populous states, trailing Texas (+5.8%) and California (+5.1%). Among all states, Florida ranked ninth behind Hawaii (+12.7%), Nevada (+6.9%), Texas (+5.8%), Washington (+5.4%), Massachusetts (+5.3%), Utah (+5.3%), California (+5.1%), and Arizona (4.9%).

September 2021 marked an improvement in Florida's job growth ranking among all states. In the 12 months prior, Florida's job growth ranking had fluctuated between 5th and 9th among the 10 most populous states, and between 17th and 42nd among all states.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts and Recovery
Due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,178,100 statewide jobs were lost between February and April 2020. Between April 2020 and September 2021, 973,200 jobs were recovered (82.6 percent of the jobs lost). As of September 2021, statewide employment remains 205,400 (-2.3 percent) below February 2020 level.

Since February 2020, 22,362,000 national jobs were lost between February and April 2020. Between April 2020 and September 2021, 17,627,000 jobs were recovered (78.8 percent of the jobs lost). As of September 2021, national employment remains 4,735,000 (-3.1 percent) below February 2020 levels.

Job numbers in financial, professional and business services, and some subsectors of trade and transportation have exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Leisure and hospitality and food accommodation services which realized the largest job losses from February to April 2020 continue to rebound recovering 51.9% and 61.6% of jobs, respectively. The main effect to date on the overall distribution of employment has been a significant decline in the leisure and hospitality sector's relative share of Florida employment. Table 2.12 contains details on the jobs lost and jobs gained between February 2020 and September 2021 for all major industries.

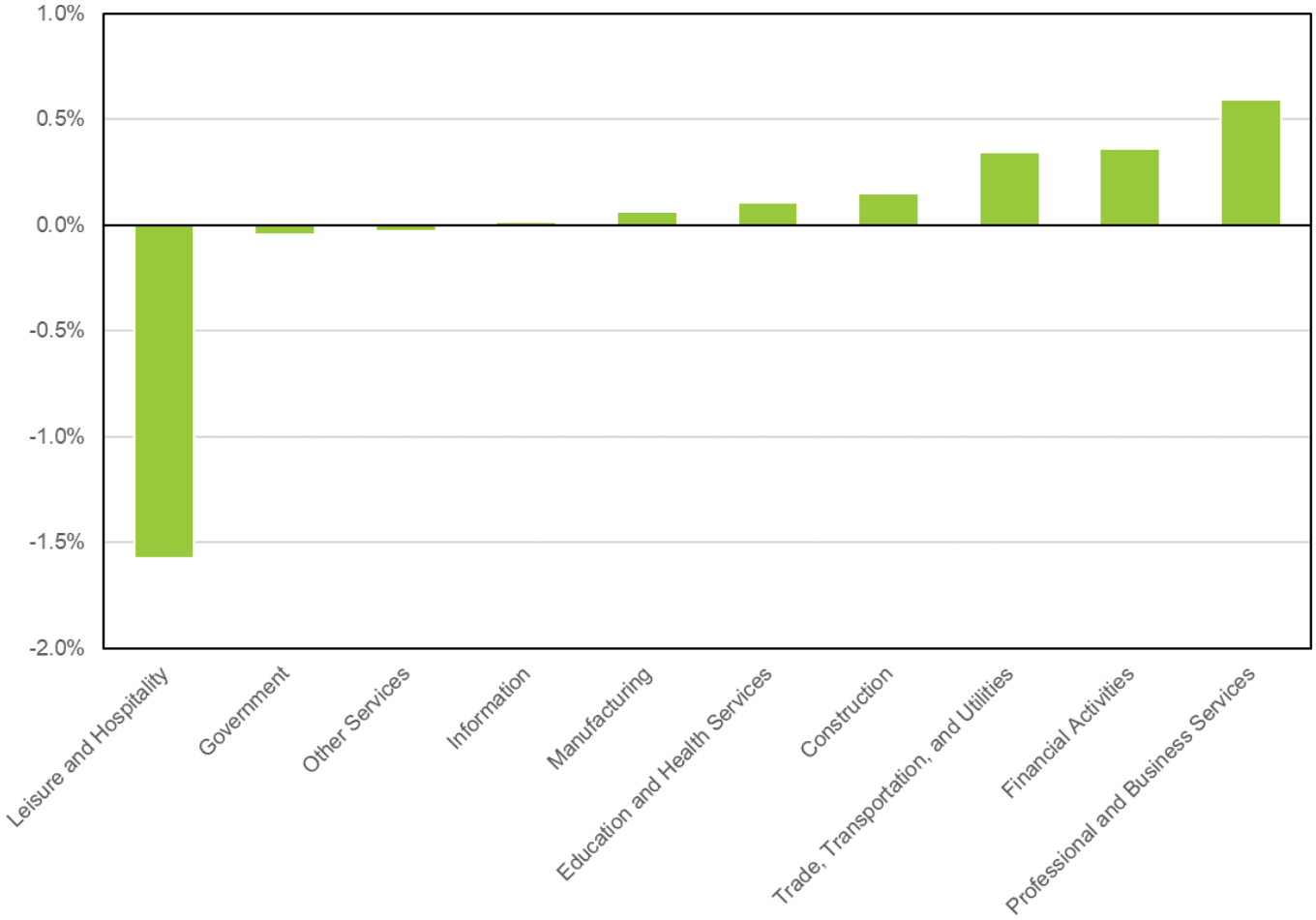
Figure 2.12
COVID-19 Pandemic Impact and Recovery by Industry

Industry Title	February to April 2020 Change		April 2020 to September 2021 Change		February 2020 to September 2021 Change	
	Level	Percent	Level	Percent	Level	Percent
Total Nonagricultural Employment	-1,178,100	-13.0%	973,200	12.3%	-204,900	-2.3%
Total Private	-1,156,000	-14.6%	978,500	14.4%	-177,500	-2.2%
Goods Producing	-57,600	-5.9%	48,700	5.3%	-8,900	-0.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	-24,300	-4.1%	17,900	3.2%	-6,400	-1.1%
Construction	-24,000	-4.1%	17,700	3.2%	-6,300	-1.1%
Manufacturing	-33,300	-8.6%	30,800	8.7%	-2,500	-0.6%
Durable Goods	-16,900	-6.3%	16,400	6.6%	-500	-0.2%
Nondurable Goods	-16,400	-13.5%	14,400	13.6%	-2,000	-1.6%
Service Producing	-1,120,500	-13.8%	924,500	13.3%	-196,000	-2.4%
Private Service Providing	-1,098,400	-15.8%	929,800	15.9%	-168,600	-2.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	-165,600	-9.1%	151,300	9.1%	-14,300	-0.8%
Wholesale Trade	-18,000	-5.1%	21,700	6.5%	3,700	1.0%
Retail Trade	-119,800	-10.8%	92,400	9.3%	-27,400	-2.5%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	-27,800	-7.8%	37,200	11.4%	9,400	2.7%
Information	-9,300	-6.7%	8,000	6.2%	-1,300	-0.9%
Financial Activities	-23,400	-3.9%	49,300	8.6%	25,900	4.3%
Finance and Insurance	2,100	0.5%	26,200	6.6%	28,300	7.2%
Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	-25,500	-12.6%	23,100	13.1%	-2,400	-1.2%
Professional and Business Services	-150,900	-10.7%	170,700	13.6%	19,800	1.4%
Professional and Technical Services	-41,100	-6.7%	89,100	15.6%	48,000	7.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	-2,500	-2.1%	-3,500	-3.1%	-6,000	-5.2%
Administrative and Waste Services	-107,300	-15.8%	85,100	14.9%	-22,200	-3.3%
Education and Health Services	-132,500	-9.7%	116,100	9.4%	-16,400	-1.2%
Educational Services	-24,600	-13.8%	22,300	14.5%	-2,300	-1.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	-107,900	-9.1%	93,800	8.7%	-14,100	-1.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	-550,400	-43.0%	378,300	51.9%	-172,100	-13.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	-93,500	-37.1%	26,600	16.8%	-66,900	-26.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	-456,900	-44.5%	351,700	61.6%	-105,200	-10.2%
Other Services	-66,300	-18.7%	56,100	19.5%	-10,200	-2.9%
Total Government	-22,100	-2.0%	-5,300	-0.5%	-27,400	-2.4%
Federal Government	400	0.3%	3,900	2.7%	4,300	3.0%
State Government	-10,200	-3.9%	-12,500	-5.0%	-22,700	-8.8%
Local Government	-12,300	-1.7%	3,300	0.5%	-9,000	-1.2%

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

Although statewide employment is approaching pre-pandemic levels, different industries have recovered at different rates. The current pace of industry growth may signal a long-term shift in the distribution of employment between sectors. As of September 2021, statewide employment is more concentrated in Professional and Business Services; Financial Activities; and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities than in February 2020. Conversely, employment has become much less concentrated in the Leisure and Hospitality sector over the same time period.

Figure 2.13
Change in Percent Share of Florida Industry Sectors
February 2020 – September 2021 (Seasonally Adjusted)



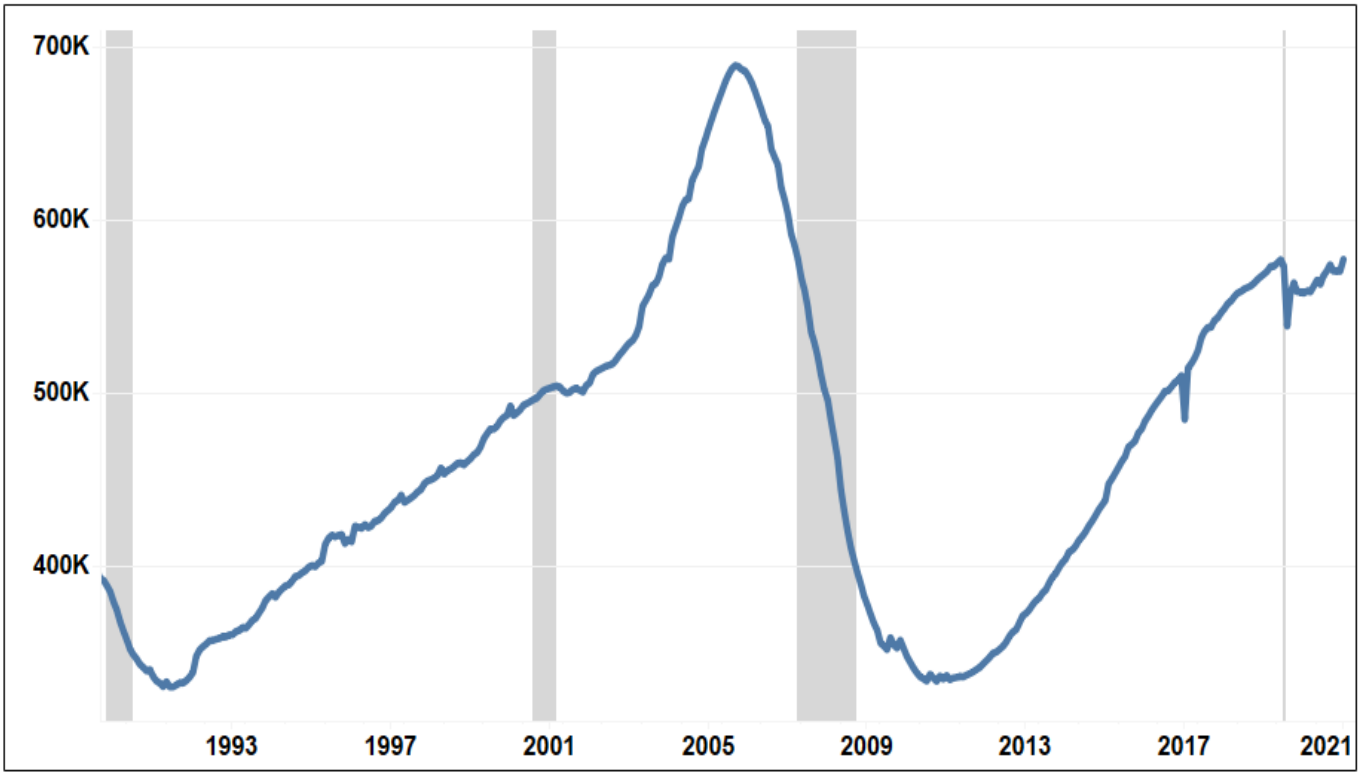
Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

(ii) Detailed Industry Sectors

Industry Detail
This Industry Detail section shows employment in the major industry sectors over time. The analyses depict impacts of recessions on each industry and current trends. Recessions are indicated by gray bars in the graphs below. The calculations in this section are all seasonally adjusted.

Construction
Florida experienced large declines in Construction employment from 2006 to 2011 in the aftermath of the housing bubble collapse. Construction employment peaked in May 2006 at 689,300 jobs and is currently at 577,400 jobs (a decrease of 111,900 jobs). At the low point during this decline, Construction employment was 333,700 (March 2011). Since March 2011, 243,700 jobs in the industry have been recovered.

Figure 2.14
Florida Construction Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

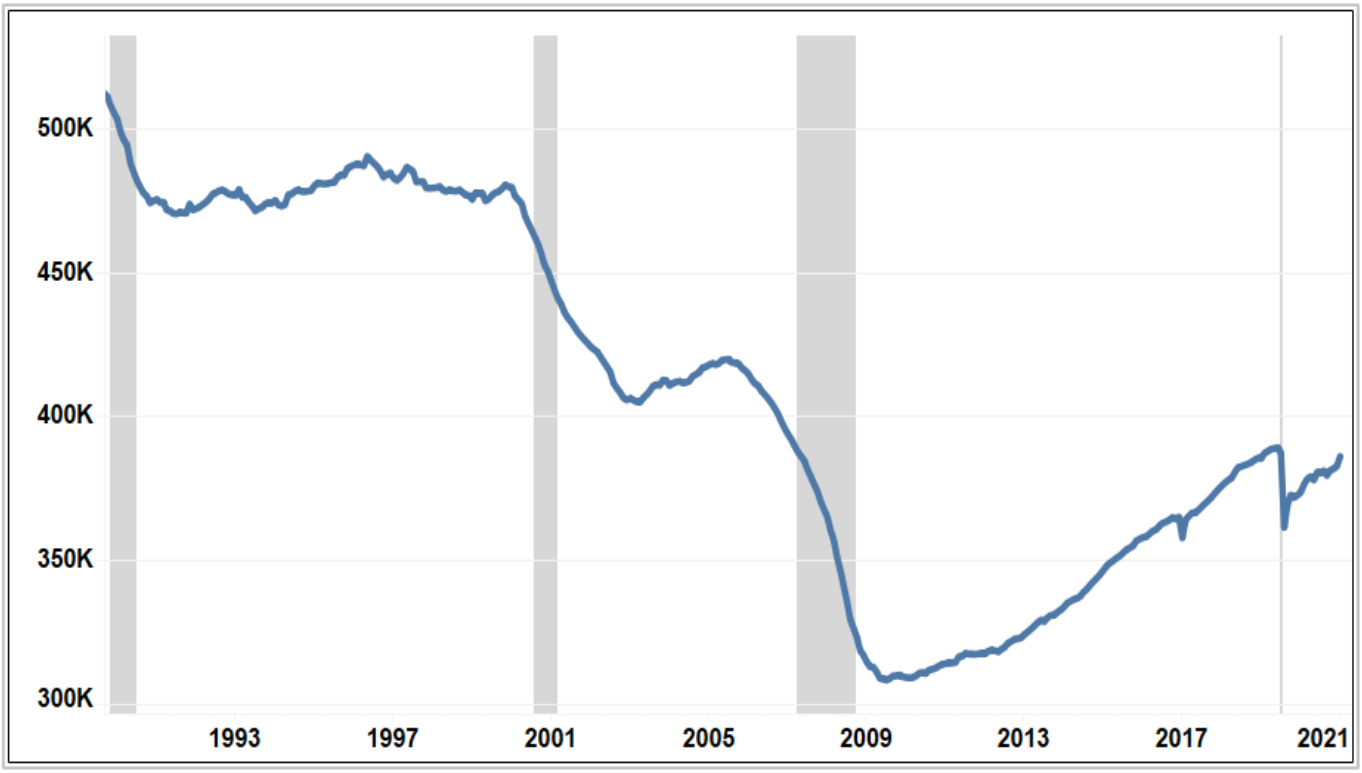
Since the end of the Great Recession, Construction employment was trending upward until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Construction employment was 577,200 in February 2020. Florida lost 38,300 Construction jobs from February to April 2020 and has since gained back 38,500 jobs. In September 2021, employment in this sector was 577,400 which is 200 more than February 2020 number.

Although changes in Construction employment during past recessions have generally been greater in Florida than in the U.S. as a whole, Florida Construction employment during the COVID-19 pandemic remained more stable than it did across the broader U.S. Construction is particularly important as a share of employment in the Southwest Florida (LWDA 24) region.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing in Florida is closely tied to construction and several subsectors of the industry lost jobs due to the decline in housing activity after 2007. Manufacturing employment has generally been declining since the 1980s, although it ramped up from 2003 to 2006. During the Great Recession, there was a rapid decrease in Manufacturing employment. After the low in March 2010 (308,300 employed), the number of jobs in this sector had been trending upward again until March of 2020. Florida lost 27,800 Manufacturing jobs from February to April 2020 and has since gained back 24,700 jobs. In September 2021, the employment was 386,200.

Figure 2.15
Florida Manufacturing Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

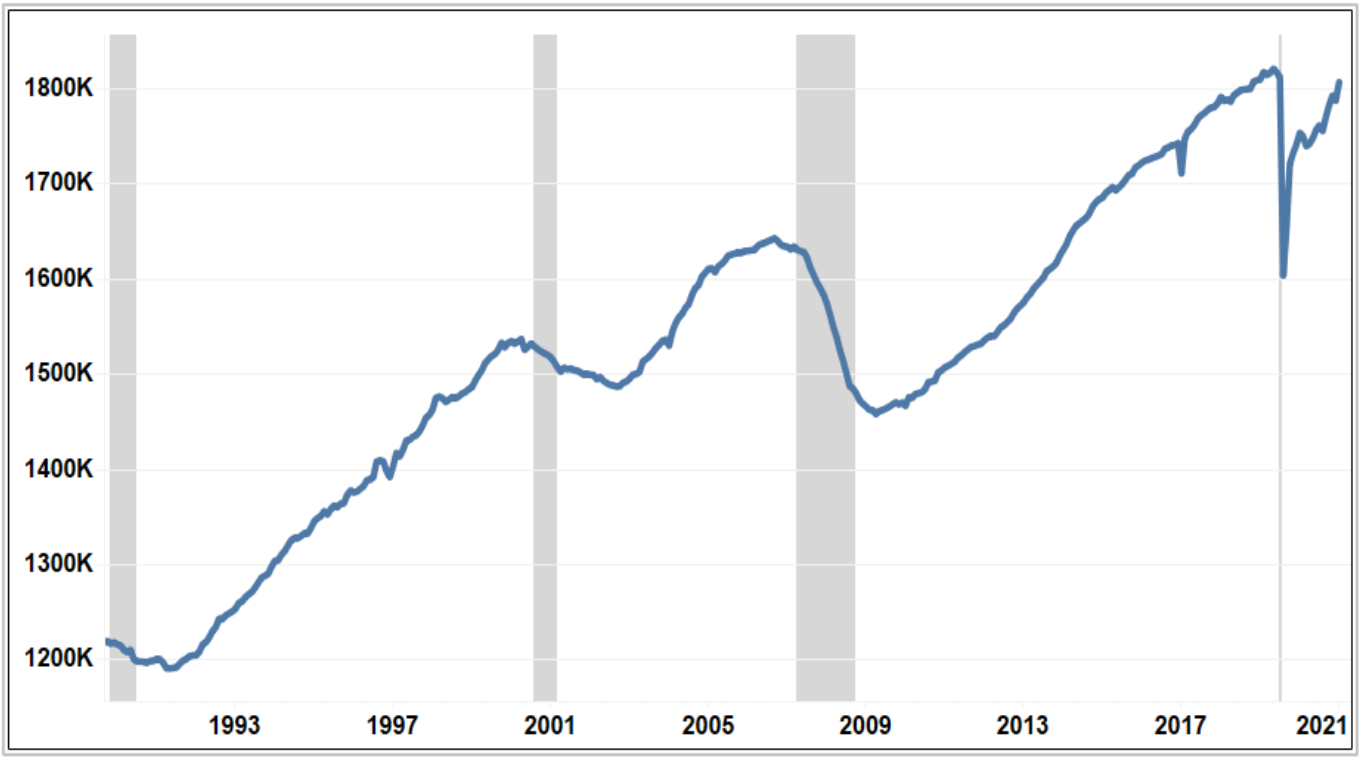
Florida's pre-pandemic growth in Manufacturing employment was generally greater than in the U.S. as a whole, and the COVID-19 pandemic had less of an effect on the sector in Florida than it did nationwide Manufacturing accounts for a particularly large share of employment in the North Florida (LWDA 6) and Brevard (LWDA 13) regions.

Trade, Transportation and Utilities

This industry is dependent on tourism and the general economic vitality of the state's economy. As of September 2021, the industry is slightly below its previous peak in employment.

Since the end of the Great Recession, employment in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities had been trending upward until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry's employment was 1,817,500 in February 2020. Florida lost 213,400 jobs in the sector from February to April 2020 but has since regained 95% of the jobs lost (+203,000).

Figure 2.16
Florida Trade, Transportation and Utilities Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

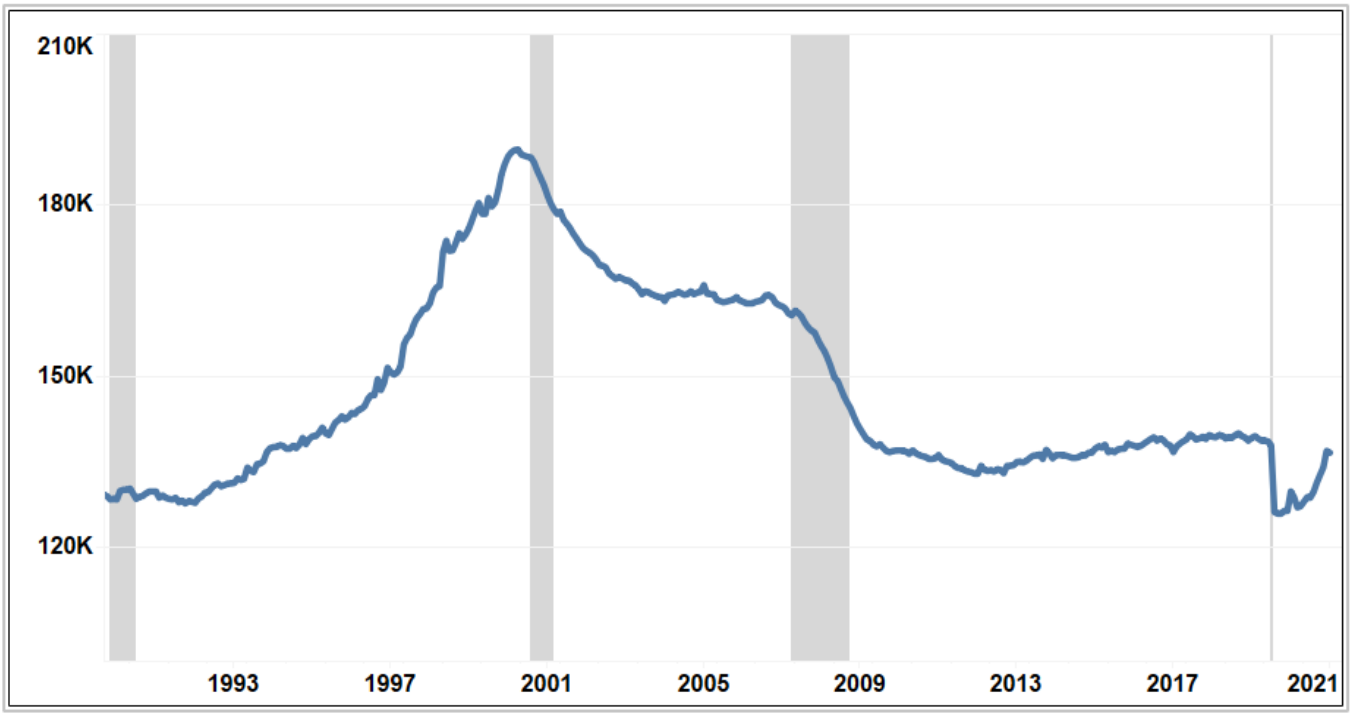


Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

Information

Florida experienced large declines in the Information sector employment from 2001 to 2004 after the end of the tech bubble, and from 2007 to 2010 following the collapse of the housing bubble. Industry employment has generally remained steady since the low point after the Great Recession and as of September 2021 is 4,000 jobs greater than the August 2012 low of 132,900.

Figure 2.17
Florida Information Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

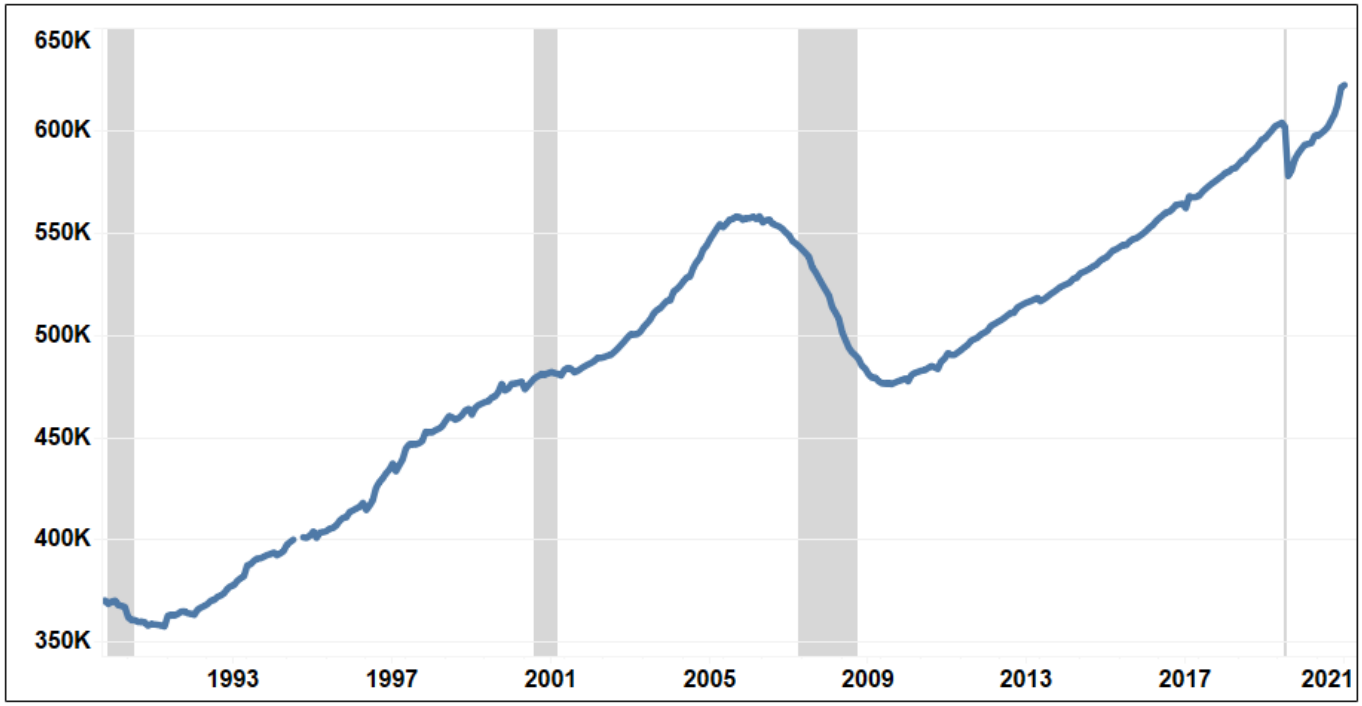
In February 2020, the employment was 138,600. Florida lost 10,700 Information jobs from February to April 2020 and has since gained back 8,700 jobs. In September 2021, the employment for the month was 136,600.

Florida's rate of growth in Information employment has generally mirrored or run slightly below the nationwide rate. Information employment is broadly distributed around the state, although mostly in metropolitan areas.

Financial Activities

Financial Activities employment in Florida previously peaked at 558,000 jobs in May 2006 and experienced a rapid decline to 476,200 in April 2010 during the Great Recession. Since the low, employment in this sector had been trending upward until February 2020, when employment was 603,900.

Figure 2.18
Florida Financial Activities Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

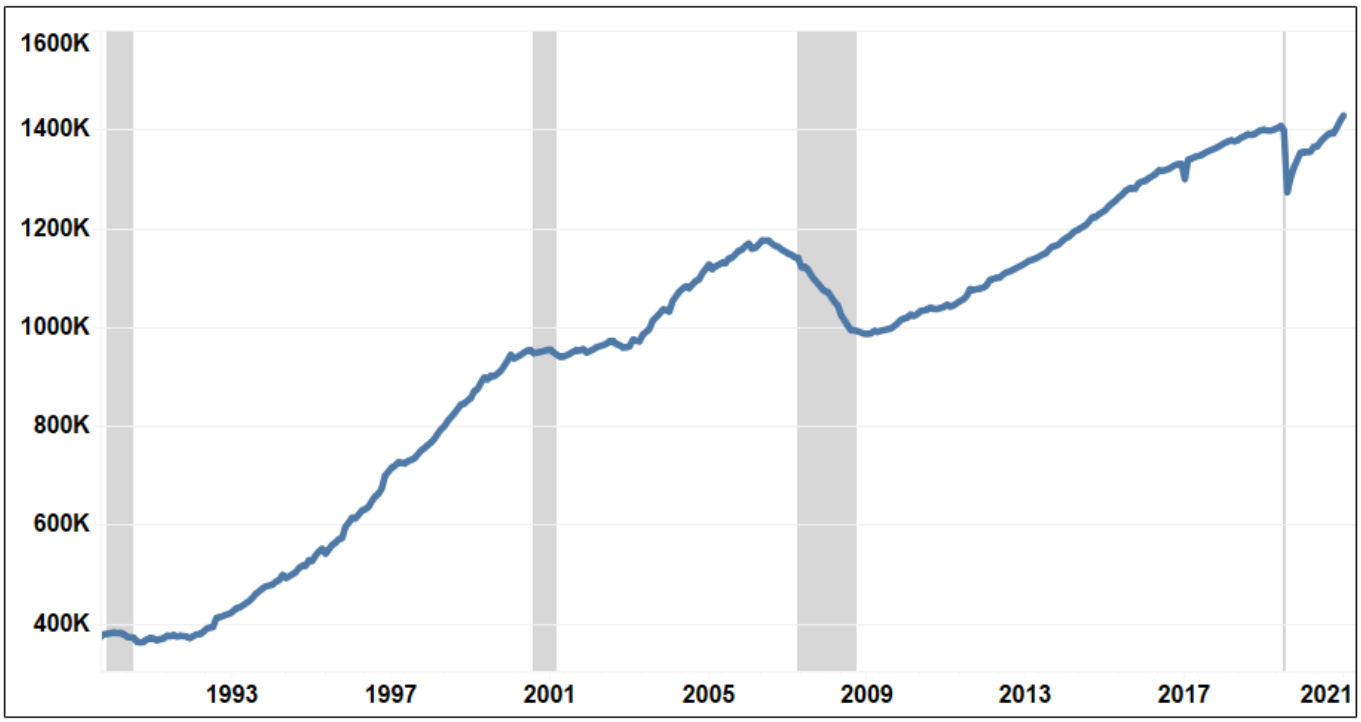
Florida lost 26,000 jobs in this industry between February and April 2020 and has since gained back more than the total jobs lost. As of September 2021, the employment was 622,300, which is 18,400 more jobs than February 2020, and a new all-time high.

The Financial Activities sector in Florida has historically grown more rapidly than in the U.S. as a whole. This pattern has only intensified post-pandemic. Financial Activities jobs are a particularly significant share of employment in the Tampa Bay (LWDA 15) region, and to a lesser extent the Northeast Florida (LWDA 8) region.

Professional and Business Services

Employment in Florida's Professional and Business Services industry has been growing steadily for the past 30 years, with the exception of a decline during the Great Recession, which bottomed out at 987,400 jobs in September 2009. Since the end of the Great Recession, the jobs in this sector had returned to their upward trend until March of 2020.

Figure 2.19
Florida Professional and Business Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

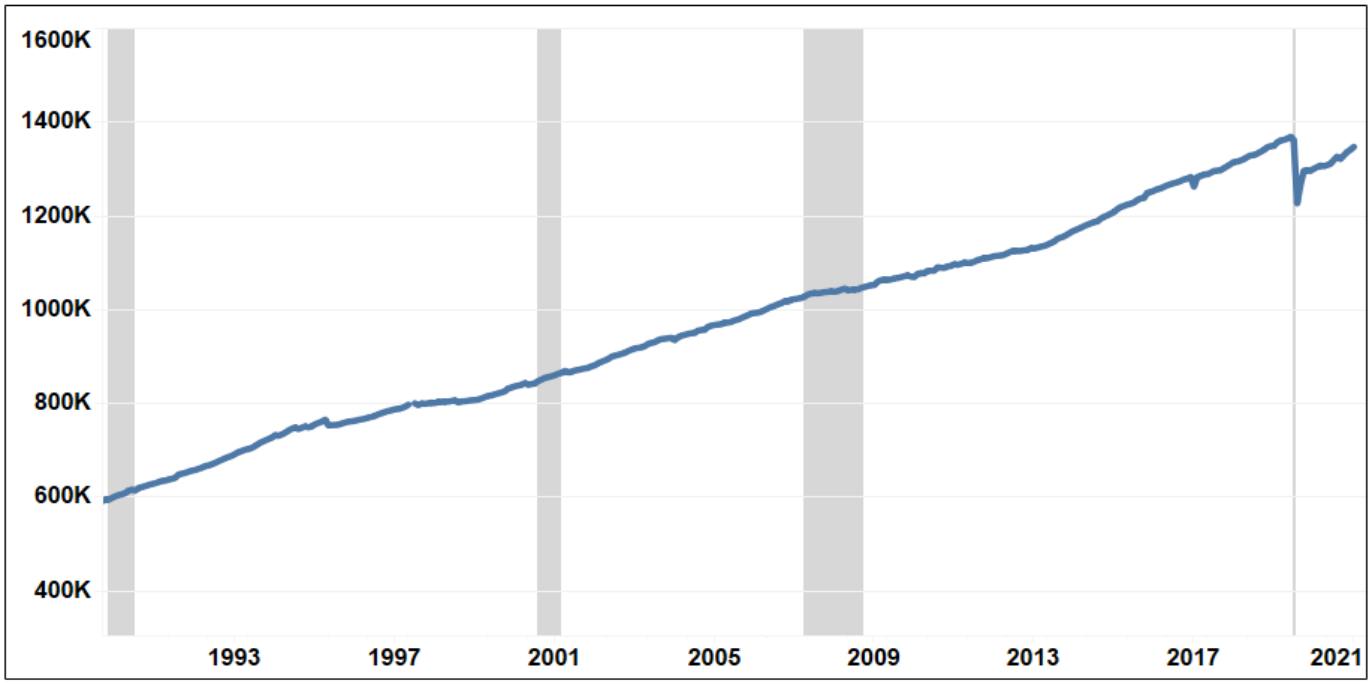
In February 2020, the employment in this sector was 1,408,200. Florida lost 134,400 Professional and business services jobs from February to April 2020 and has since gained back more than the total jobs lost. As of September 2021, the employment was 1,428,900: an increase of 20,700 jobs over the February 2020 level.

Florida's rate of growth in Professional and Business Services employment has generally mirrored or run slightly above the nationwide rate. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry in Florida was almost identical to that on the U.S. as a whole. Professional and Business Services employment is broadly distributed around the state, although mostly in metropolitan areas, especially in central and south Florida.

Education and Health Services

Florida did not experience declines in Education and Health Services employment in recent recessions, with the exception of the COVID-19 recession. The employment in this sector has been growing steadily, although the rate of job growth did slow during the Great Recession.

Figure 2.20
Florida Education and Health Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

Education and Health Services employment has been slower to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic than most other industries. Employment was 1,368,900 in February 2020 and 1,347,300 in September 2021. Florida lost 141,800 jobs from this sector from February to April 2020 and has since gained back 120,200 jobs (85% of the jobs lost).

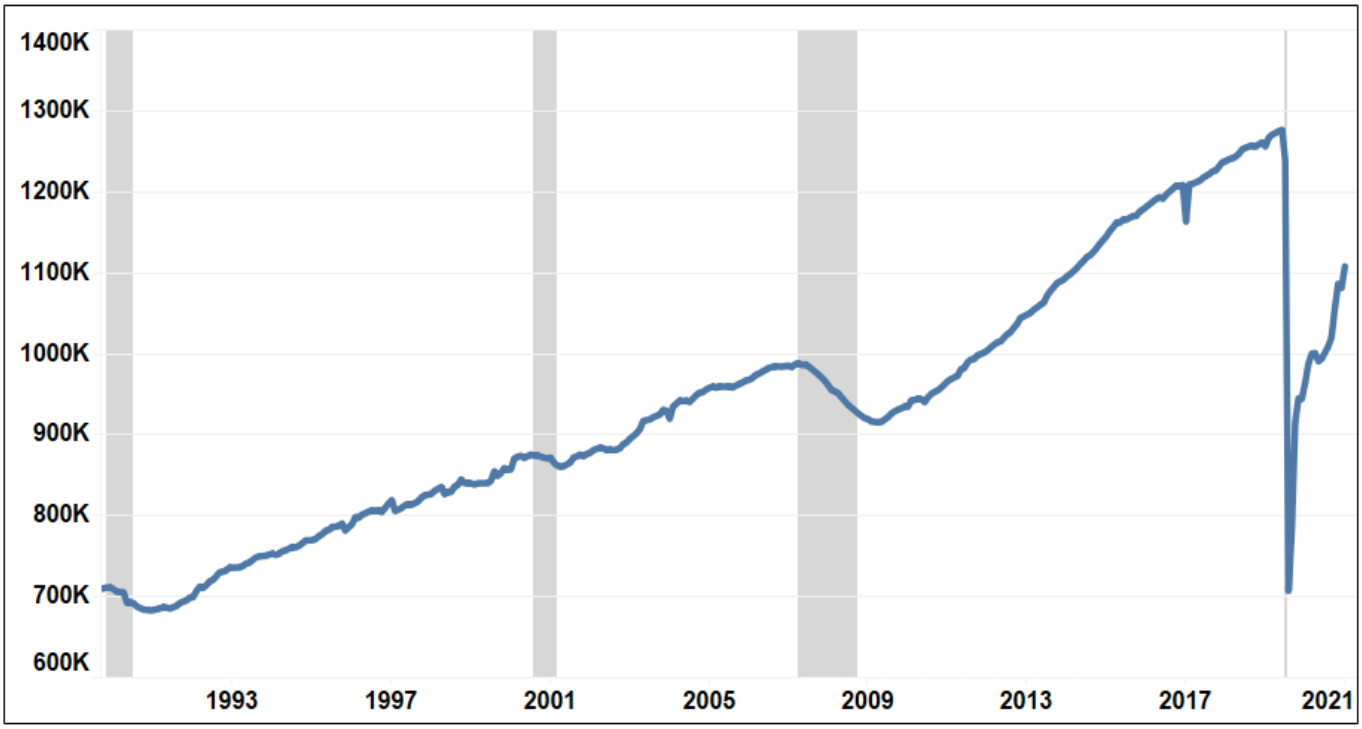
As of September 2021, 87 percent of jobs in Education and Health Services are in the Health Care and Social Assistance subsector, which has recovered at a slightly slower pace (86.9 percent of jobs lost) than the Educational Services subsector (90.7 percent of jobs lost).

Florida's rate of growth in Education and Health Services employment has generally mirrored the nationwide rate. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry in Florida was only slightly smaller than that on the U.S. as a whole. Education and Health Services jobs are a particularly large share of employment in the North Central Florida (LWDA 9), Flagler Volusia (LWDA 13), and Pasco Hernando (LWDA 16) regions.

Leisure and Hospitality

Leisure and hospitality employment in Florida experienced a significant decrease during the Great Recession, reaching a low of 915,100 employed in December 2009.

Figure 2.21
Florida Leisure and Hospitality Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

Since the end of the Great Re cession, Leisure and Hospitality employment had been trending upward at an accelerating rate until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leisure and Hospitality suffered the greatest job loss of any industry during the pandemic and has been the slowest sector to recover.

The employment in this sector was 1,276,500 in February 2020. Florida lost 569,100 Leisure and Hospitality jobs from February to April 2020 and has since gained back 70% of the jobs lost. In September 2021, employment in this sector was 1,107,900 which is still 168,600 fewer jobs than in February 2020.

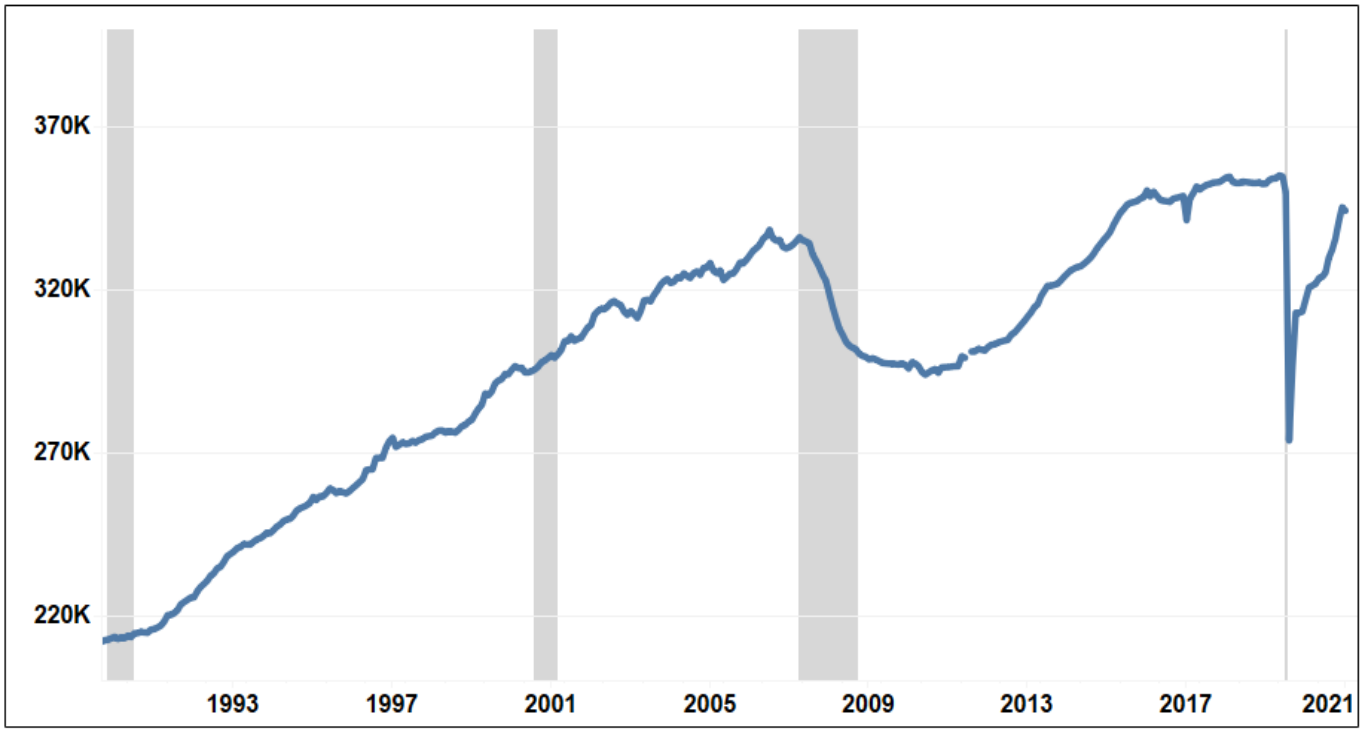
Historically, Florida's rate of growth in Leisure and Hospitality employment has closely mirrored the nationwide rate. Industry job loss in Florida due to the COVID-19 pandemic was equivalent to that in the U.S. as a whole. However, Florida's rate of recovery in this sector has lagged the nationwide rate.

Leisure and Hospitality constitute a disproportionately large share of total employment in the Okaloosa Walton (LWDA 2), Gulf Coast (LWDA 4), and Central Florida (LWDA 12) regions.

Other Services

The Other Services sector comprises establishments engaged in providing services not specifically provided for elsewhere in the industry classification system. Examples range from automotive repair and maintenance to environment, conservation and wildlife organizations. Other Services employment in Florida experienced large declines during the Great Recession and did not start to recover until 2012.

Figure 2.22
Florida Other Services Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

The number of jobs in this sector had been trending upward again until March of 2020. Other Services employment was 355,000 in February 2020. Florida lost 81,100 jobs from this sector from February to April 2020 and has since gained back 70,600 jobs (87% of the jobs lost).

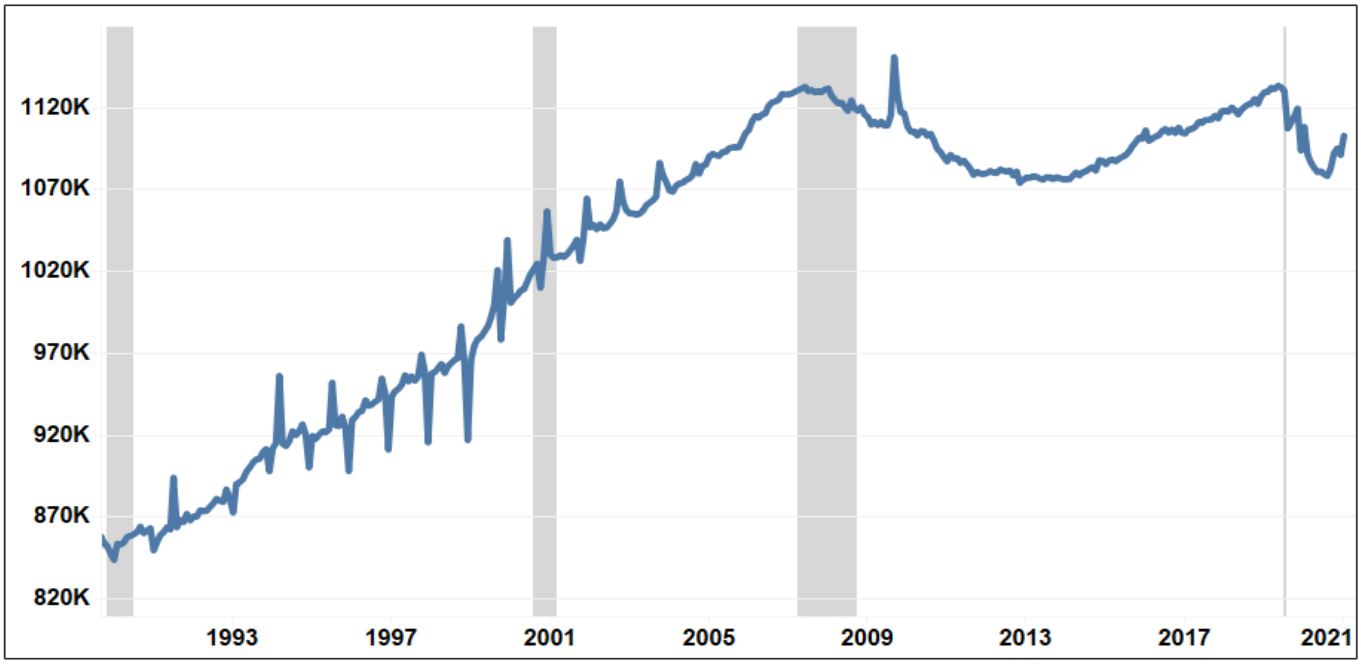
Aside from the trough in the years after the Great Recession, Florida's rate of growth in Other Services had historically tended to run above the nationwide rate, although this trend ended around 2017. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry in Florida was somewhat less than that on the U.S. as a whole.

Other Services jobs are a particularly significant share of employment in the Okaloosa Walton (LWDA 2) region, and to a lesser degree in the Research Coast (LWDA 20) region.

Government

Florida experienced losses in total government employment from 2008 to 2014. Since 2014, the number of jobs in this sector had been trending upward and had nearly returned to 2008 levels just prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2.23
Florida Government Employment, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research (WSER), Current Employment Statistics, September 2021.

The employment in this sector was 1,132,600 in February 2020. Florida lost 25,200 Government jobs from February to April 2020. However, employment in this sector continued to decline until April 2021. Government employment in Florida was 1,102,900 in September 2021, which is 29,700 fewer jobs than February 2020 employment.

Florida's rate of growth in the Government sector since the aftermath of the Great Recession has generally mirrored that of the U.S. as a whole. However, the sector's rate of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has run below the nationwide rate. Government jobs in Florida are a disproportionately large share of total employment in the Chipola (LWDA 3), Capital Region (LWDA 5), North Florida (LWDA 6), Florida Crown (LWDA 7), and North Central Florida (LWDA 9) regions.

(iii) Projected Industry Trends

Emerging Demand Industries

Emerging industries are new or small industries with high projected employment growth. The emerging industries listed below reflect the four-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industries with the fastest projected growth rates over the next eight years for industries with less than the average employment level. Notably, Leisure and Hospitality industries occupy three of the five top positions on the list of emerging industries, while Trade, Transportation, and Utilities occupy five of the top 10 and nine of the top 20. The complete list of the fastest growing industries is in Figure 2.24 below.

Figure 2.24
Top Emerging Industries

Sector	Code	Industry Title	2021 Employment	2029 Employment	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4855	Charter Bus Industry	1,080	1,660	580	53.70%
Leisure and Hospitality	7113	Performing Arts and Sports Promoters	7,726	11,561	3,835	49.64%
Leisure and Hospitality	7111	Performing Arts Companies	5,334	7,857	2,523	47.30%
Information	5121	Motion Picture and Video Industries	10,570	15,490	4,920	46.55%
Leisure and Hospitality	7121	Museums, Parks and Historical Sites	6,925	10,104	3,179	45.91%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4889	Other Support Activities for Transport	2,424	3,451	1,027	42.37%
Professional and Business Services	5615	Travel Arrangement & Reservation Service	20,678	29,337	8,659	41.88%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4881	Support Activities for Air Transport	24,052	33,842	9,790	40.70%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4482	Shoe Stores	12,921	18,079	5,158	39.92%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4422	Home Furnishings Stores	14,626	20,050	5,424	37.08%
Financial Activities	5321	Automotive Equipment Rental and Leasing	14,833	19,841	5,008	33.76%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4869	Other Pipeline Transportation	196	262	66	33.67%
Education and Health Services	6117	Educational Support Services	8,543	11,333	2,790	32.66%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4883	Support Activities for Water Transport	7,846	10,347	2,501	31.88%
Education and Health Services	6116	Other Schools and Instruction	22,306	28,686	6,380	28.60%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4853	Taxi and Limousine Service	1,986	2,541	555	27.95%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4859	Other Ground Passenger Transportation	4,841	6,157	1,316	27.18%
Professional and Business Services	5418	Advertising and Related Services	22,300	27,973	5,673	25.44%
Leisure and Hospitality	7112	Spectator Sports	16,640	20,785	4,145	24.91%
Information	5112	Software Publishers	20,378	25,449	5,071	24.88%

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

High Growth Industries

High growth industries are those projected to gain the most jobs in total, regardless of the current size of the industry. Figure 2.25 displays the top 20 4-digit NAICS industries by projected job gain, 2021-2029. The high growth industries involve a broader mix of sectors than the emerging industries. Nevertheless, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities still occupy six of the top 20 positions. Education and Health Services occupy four, and Leisure and Hospitality still account for three.

Figure 2.25
Industries Gaining the Most Total Jobs

Sector	Code	Industry Title	2021 Employment	2029 Employment	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4881	Support Activities for Air Transport	24,052	33,842	9,790	40.70%
Professional and Business Services	5615	Travel Arrangement & Reservation Service	20,678	29,337	8,659	41.88%
Manufacturing	3364	Aerospace Product & Parts Manufacturing	27,236	33,730	6,494	23.84%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4539	Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	27,517	33,966	6,449	23.44%
Education and Health Services	6116	Other Schools and Instruction	22,306	28,686	6,380	28.60%
Professional and Business Services	5418	Advertising and Related Services	22,300	27,973	5,673	25.44%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4422	Home Furnishings Stores	14,626	20,050	5,424	37.08%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4482	Shoe Stores	12,921	18,079	5,158	39.92%
Information	5112	Software Publishers	20,378	25,449	5,071	24.88%
Financial Activities	5321	Automotive Equipment Rental and Leasing	14,833	19,841	5,008	33.76%
Information	5121	Motion Picture and Video Industries	10,570	15,490	4,920	46.55%
Professional and Business Services	5417	Scientific Research and Development Svc	20,785	25,561	4,776	22.98%
Education and Health Services	6215	Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories	24,737	29,442	4,705	19.02%
Education and Health Services	6232	Residential Mental Health Facilities	22,045	26,729	4,684	21.25%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4541	Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	23,721	28,333	4,612	19.44%
Leisure and Hospitality	7112	Spectator Sports	16,640	20,785	4,145	24.91%
Education and Health Services	6219	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	17,087	21,157	4,070	23.82%

Sector	Code	Industry Title	2021 Employment	2029 Employment	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent
Leisure and Hospitality	7113	Performing Arts and Sports Promoters	7,726	11,561	3,835	49.64%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	16,401	19,834	3,433	20.93%
Leisure and Hospitality	7224	Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	24,047	27,246	3,199	13.30%

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

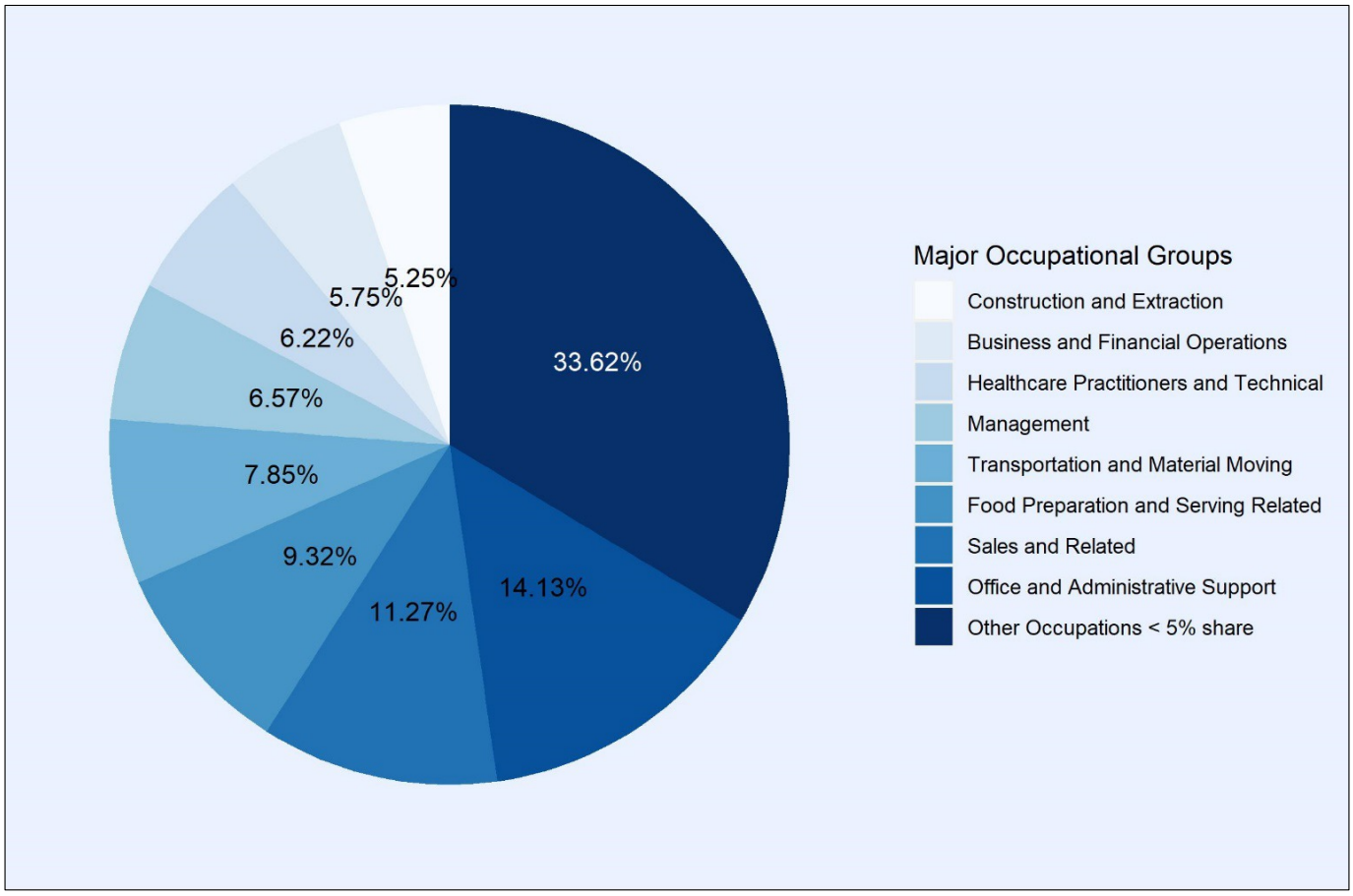
(C) OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS

(i) Existing Demand by Occupation

Occupational Groups
Occupational groups are the most aggregated level of occupations according to the Standard Occupational Classification and Coding Structure.

The three largest occupational groups in Florida are Office and Administrative Support occupations, with 1,336,477 jobs (14.1 percent of total jobs), sales and related (1,065,837 jobs, 11.3 percent) and food preparation and serving (881,884 jobs, 9.3 percent) occupations.

Figure 2.26
Percent Distribution of Employment in Florida by Major Occupational Group



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

Occupational Groups by Local Workforce Development Area
The following figures display local area employment by major occupational group. Local occupational variation results from the diversity of economic focus and industry mix of Florida's geographic areas.

Figure 2.27 lists each occupational group with the local workforce area in which that group has the highest concentration

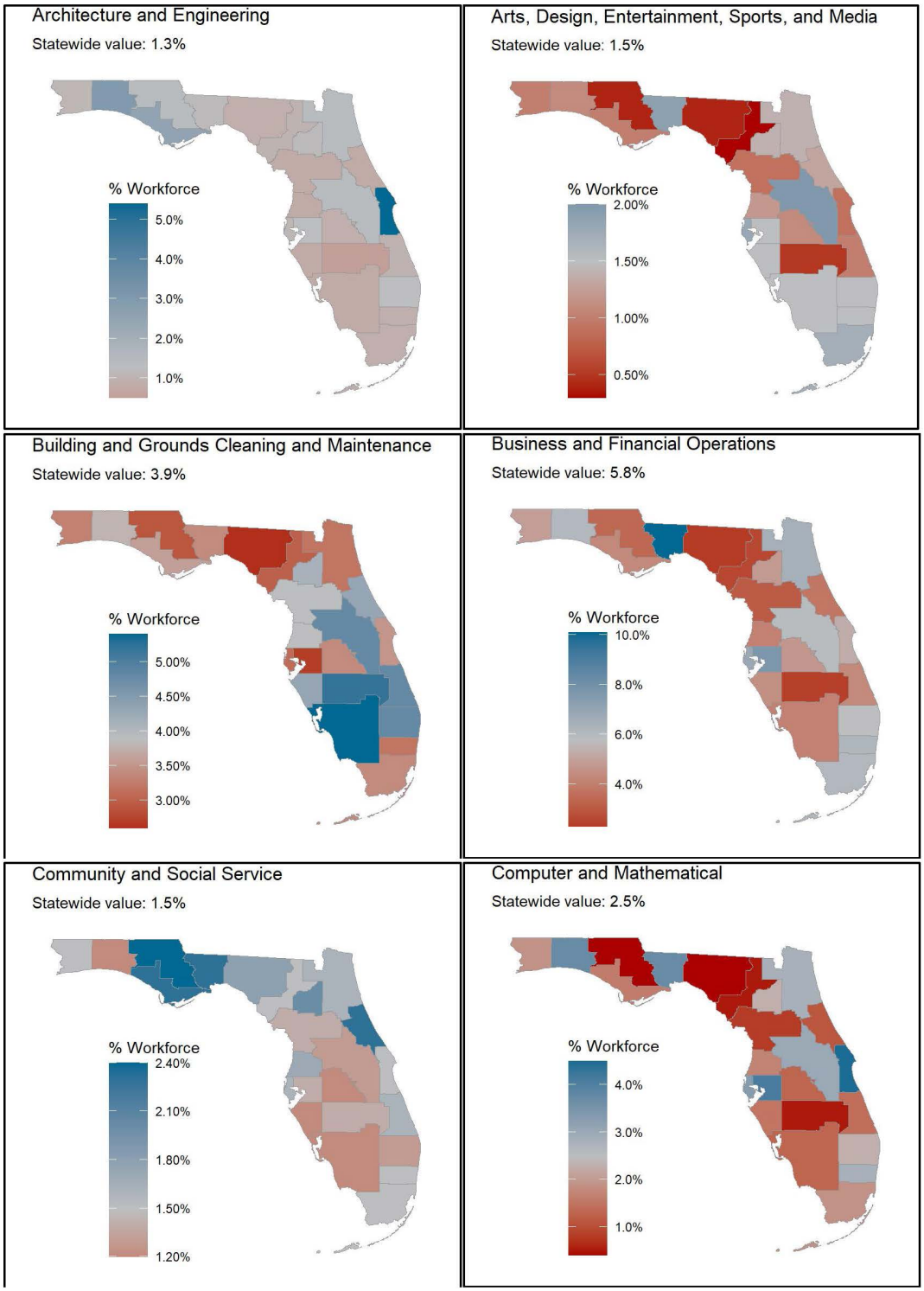
Figure 2.27
Local Workforce Area with Largest Share of Employment, by Occupational Group

Occupational Group	Local Workforce Area	Share of Employment
Architecture and Engineering	LWDA 13	5.4%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	LWDA 12	2.0%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	LWDA 24	5.4%
Business and Financial Operations	LWDA 5	10.1%
Community and Social Service	LWDA 3	2.4%
Computer and Mathematical	LWDA 13	4.5%
Construction and Extraction	LWDA 24	9.0%
Education, Training, and Library	LWDA 9	11.7%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	LWDA 19	5.2%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	LWDA 2	13.2%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	LWDA 9	10.8%
Healthcare Support	LWDA 3	5.4%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	LWDA 4	5.0%
Legal	LWDA 5	2.0%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	LWDA 9	1.5%
Management	LWDA 6	13.5%
Office and Administrative Support	LWDA 15	16.0%
Personal Care and Service	LWDA 12	3.5%
Production	LWDA 6	9.1%
Protective Service	LWDA 3	8.2%
Sales and Related	LWDA 11	13.4%
Transportation and Material Moving	LWDA 17	14.1%

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

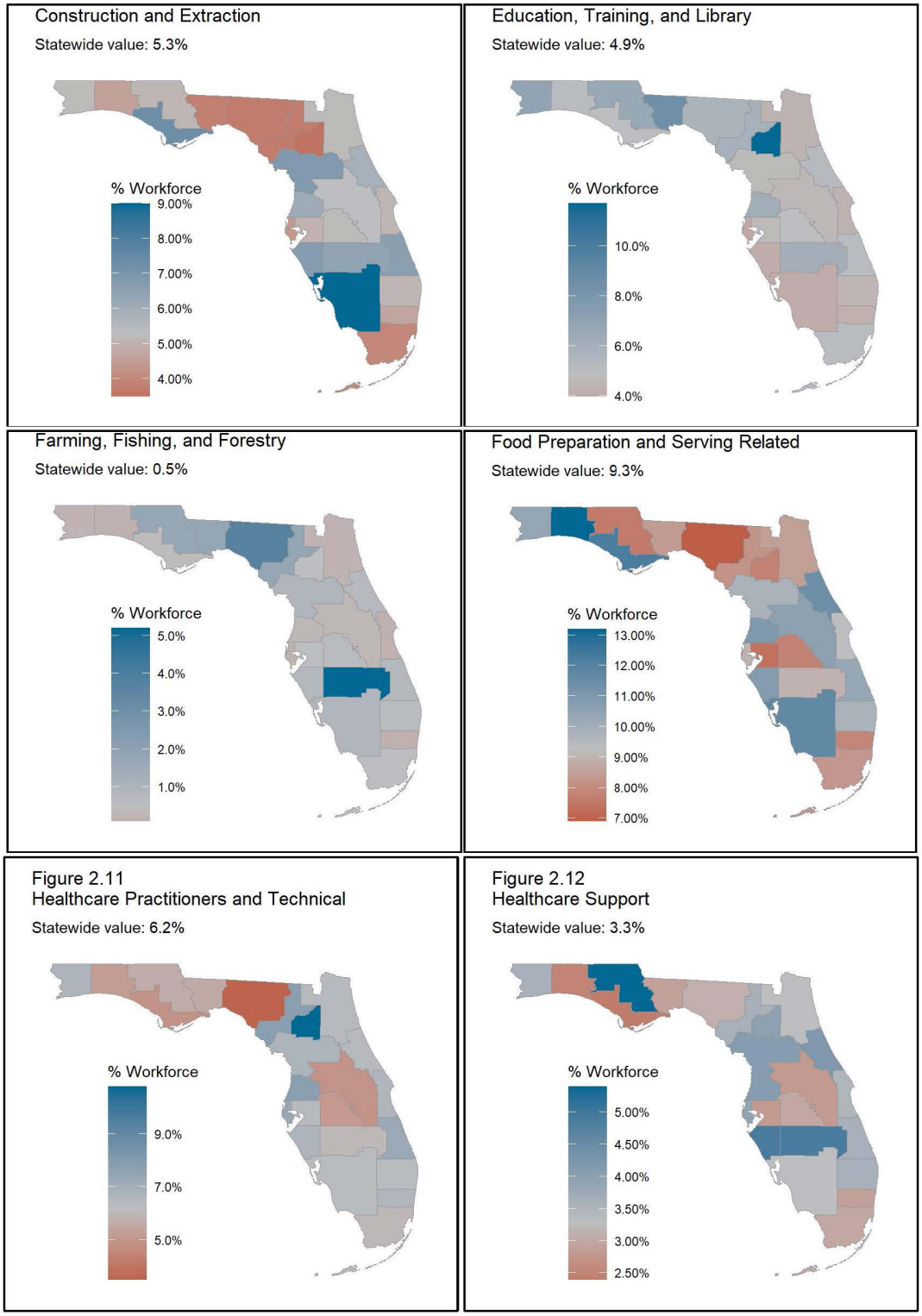
The maps in Figure 2.28 show the percent distribution of employment by major occupational group for all workforce areas in Florida. The color indicates the location quotient for employment relative to the statewide concentration, with blue indicating a share greater than statewide, red indicating a share less than statewide, and grey indicating a share similar to the statewide concentration (in other words when a local workforce area is highlighted in blue, that means the occupation is unusually concentrated in that particular area, if it is red that area has a low concentration of that occupation).

Figure 2.28
Location Quotients of Occupational Groups in Florida by LWDA



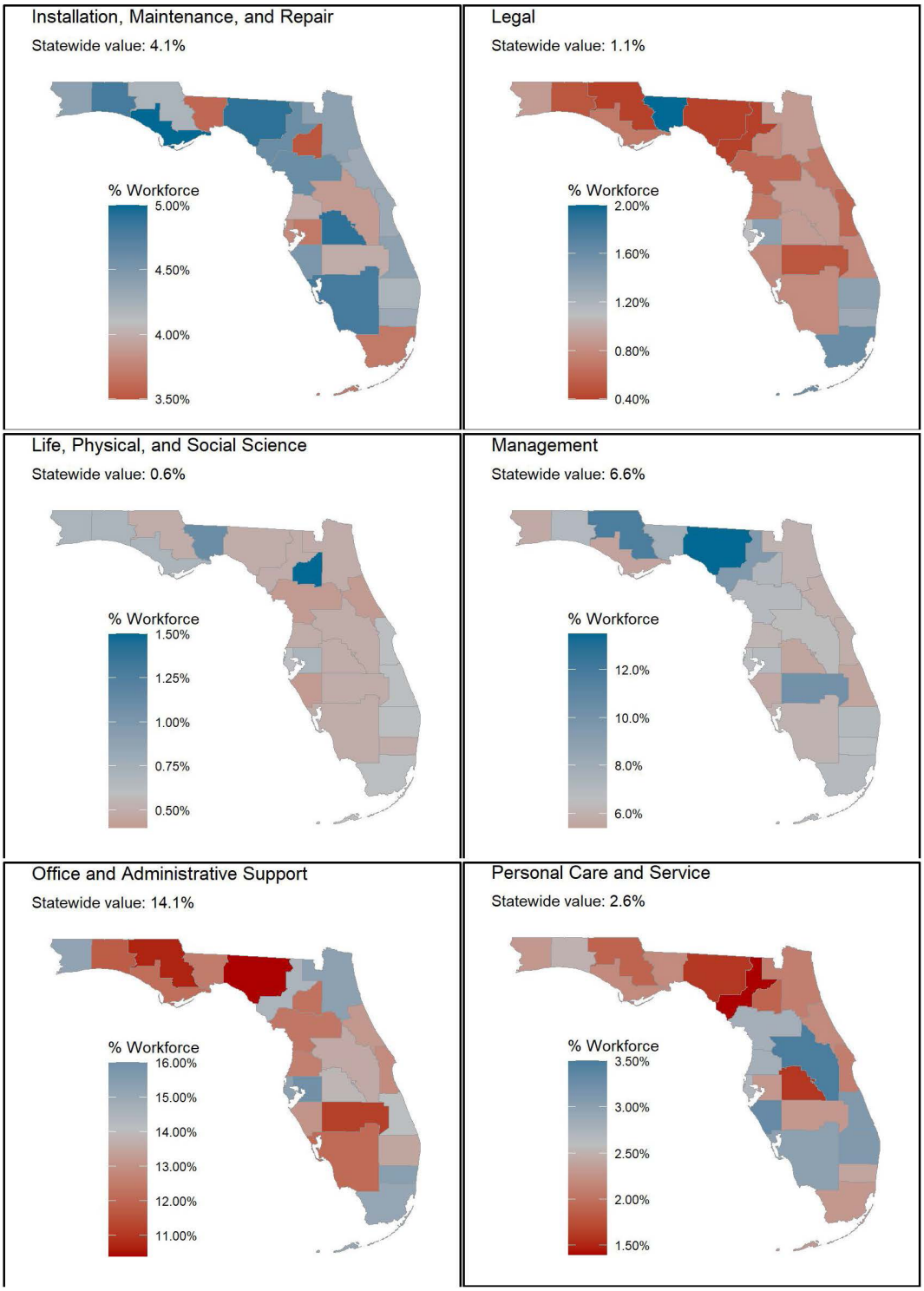
Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

Figure 2.28 (continued)
Location Quotients of Occupational Groups in Florida by LWDA



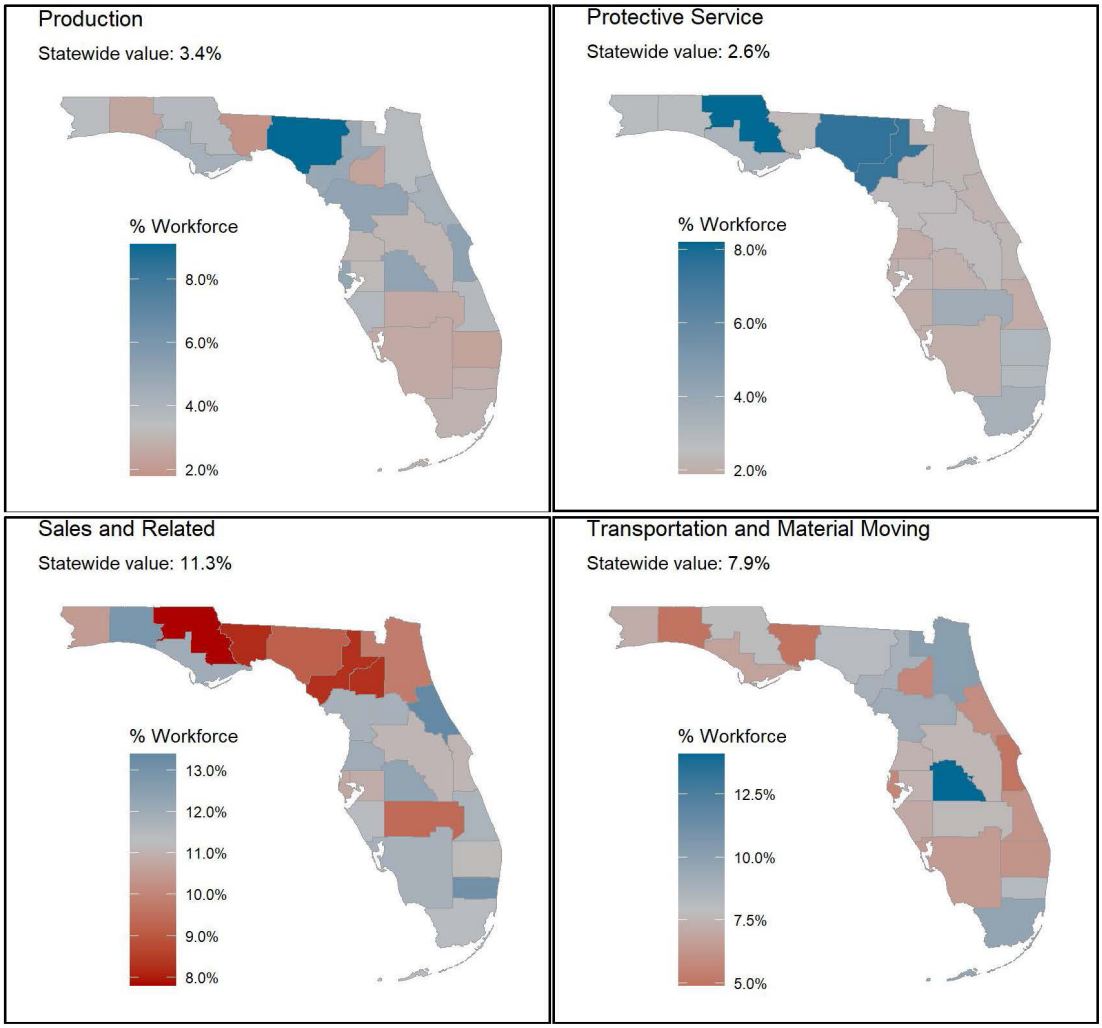
Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

Figure 2.28 (continued)
Location Quotients of Occupational Groups in Florida by LWDA



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

Figure 2.28 (continued)
Location Quotients of Occupational Groups in Florida by LWDA



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

Detailed Existing Demand Occupations

Existing demand occupations are occupations that have the highest number of projected total job openings. Starting with the release of the 2017-2025 projections, projected job openings are calculated using the new Separations Method. Total job openings reflect (1) job openings resulting from employment growth, (2) job openings resulting from workers permanently exiting an occupation and (3) job openings resulting from workers transferring to other occupations. In most occupations, replacement needs provide many more job openings than employment growth does.

The top five existing demand occupations for Florida statewide are related to customer service and hospitality. Fast Food and Counter Workers is the top existing demand occupation with 426,493 projected total job openings between 2021 and 2029. Some healthcare occupations, such as Registered Nurses and Nursing Assistants, have a relatively high turnover rate and will experience employment growth because of the increasing demand for healthcare services, driven by population growth, an aging population, and technological change. Registered Nurses as well as General and Operations Managers are the only top existing demand occupations that requires a degree beyond high school, based on criteria from the O*NET Education, Training, and Experience data.

The top existing demand occupations are largely unchanged from 2019 pre-COVID data. Of the top 15 occupation titles, 12 appear in both lists. However, top existing demand occupation employment in 2021 is on average 9,000 jobs below 2019 levels. Projected percent change through 2029 is higher than in the previous years' projections, suggesting that while most existing demand occupations have not fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic hit, they are expected to continue to show growth.

Figure 2.29 displays the top 15 existing demand occupations (based on 2021-2029 total job openings) for Florida statewide.

Figure 2.29
Top 15 Existing Demand Occupations in Florida

		Employment					2020 Hourly Wage		
Code	Occupation	2021	2029	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent	Total Openings	Median	Entry	Experienced
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	224,286	281,602	57,316	25.6	426,493	9.90	9.23	11.55
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	301,266	344,325	43,059	14.3	381,117	12.02	10.00	16.00
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	189,890	228,766	38,876	20.5	331,902	9.87	9.24	14.75
41-2011	Cashiers	222,142	228,092	5,950	2.7	309,768	11.07	9.66	12.60
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	266,499	285,391	18,892	7.1	281,835	15.96	12.09	19.55
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	164,552	184,701	20,149	12.2	188,796	13.87	10.85	17.59
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	198,938	207,584	8,646	4.3	186,328	15.76	11.22	20.13
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	105,954	146,155	40,201	37.9	170,642	13.86	10.78	15.89
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	140,320	152,681	12,361	8.8	150,880	13.26	10.73	15.64
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaner	123,997	139,491	15,494	12.5	143,644	11.97	10.09	15.15
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	108,169	126,700	18,531	17.1	129,173	13.92	11.03	16.28
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	148,703	171,600	22,897	15.4	118,040	42.13	23.11	66.15
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Med	138,301	137,606	-695	-0.5	111,898	17.04	12.17	20.48
29-1141	Registered Nurses	194,469	218,396	23,927	12.3	103,065	32.46	25.51	37.38
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	77,564	93,559	15,995	20.6	100,557	11.38	10.07	12.85

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

(ii) Projected Occupational Trends

Projected Changes in Occupational Demand
Occupational employment projections tables for all Florida geographic areas can be found on the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity website at http://floridajobs.org/labor-market-information and on the Florida Insight website at https://floridajobs.org/economic-data.

Emerging Occupations
Emerging occupations comprise (1) new occupations in the workforce and (2) traditional occupations with requisite knowledge, skills and abilities that are currently evolving in response to altered market conditions, new technology and societal changes. Some of the factors that cause occupations to emerge are changing technology, laws, demographics and business practices. In Florida, the fastest growing among the emerging occupations are statisticians, film and video editors, and information security analysts.

The most common industry sectors for emerging occupations are healthcare and professional services, due to ongoing advances in medical technology; life, physical and environmental sciences; engineering, mathematics and computer sciences; and psychology and the social sciences. The growth in healthcare sector emerging occupations reflects an increasing demand for medical services due to population aging and technological innovation.

The personal care and service occupational group is projected to account for six of the top twenty emerging occupations (Gaming Dealers, Gaming and Sports Book Writers and Runners, Manicurists and Pedicurists, First-Line Supervisors of Gambling Services Workers, Baggage Porters and Bellhops, and Concierges).

According to O*NET Education, Training, and Experience data, two of the top twenty emerging occupations require an associate degree (Physical Therapist Assistants and Occupational Therapy Assistants), four require a bachelor's degree (Film and Video Editors, Information Security Analysts, Data Scientists and Mathematical Science, and Interpreters and Translators), and four require a Master's degree (Statisticians, Physician Assistants, Museum Technicians and Conservators, and Curators).

Figure 2.30 shows the top 20 emerging occupations for Florida statewide. This list is based on the 2021- 2029 projected job growth rate for occupations with less than average employment at the occupational level.

Figure 2.30
Top 20 Emerging Occupations in Florida

		Employment					2020 Hourly Wage		
Code	Occupation	2021	2029	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent	Total Openings	Median	Entry	Experienced
15-2041	Statisticians	1,069	1,550	481	45	1,186	34.87	17.48	43.43
27-4032	Film and Video Editors	1,285	1,793	508	39.5	1,528	23.87	16.07	30.87
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	6,980	9,733	2,753	39.4	7,067	44.86	27.75	54.77
15-2098	Data Scientists and Mathematical Science Occupations, All Other	1,420	1,955	535	37.7	1,445	41.2	25.81	54.09
29-1071	Physician Assistants	7,201	9,913	2,712	37.7	6,242	52.96	35.4	60.71
25-4013	Museum Technicians and Conservators	384	523	139	36.2	513	18.81	12.76	23.34
39-3011	Gaming Dealers	3,446	4,691	1,245	36.1	6,008	9.4	9.04	12.95
39-3012	Gaming and Sports Book Writers and Runners	212	286	74	34.9	366	12.54	10.22	15.21
25-4012	Curators	739	992	253	34.2	966	24.22	15.9	31.86
39-5092	Manicurists and Pedicurists	3,387	4,546	1,159	34.2	4,396	11.97	10.58	14.21
39-1013	First-Line Supervisors of Gambling Services Workers	1,251	1,674	423	33.8	2,062	26.95	19.29	30.66
39-6011	Baggage Porters and Bellhops	4,479	5,971	1,492	33.3	6,915	10.36	9.3	13.36
43-3041	Gaming Cage Workers	412	547	135	32.8	564	13.32	10.4	14.97
31-9011	Massage Therapists	11,586	15,263	3,677	31.7	14,518	17.49	10.61	23.93
27-3091	Interpreters and Translators	3,821	5,030	1,209	31.6	4,233	23.48	12.93	32.95
11-9071	Gaming Managers	271	355	84	31	327	36.33	24.56	50.35
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	3,214	4,202	988	30.7	3,838	32.19	25.87	35.77
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	7,096	9,264	2,168	30.6	8,962	30.12	21.23	34.8
27-2011	Actors	511	667	156	30.5	615	18.26	11.39	26.23
39-6012	Concierges	5,536	7,218	1,682	30.4	8,299	13.49	10.86	15.5

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and

Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

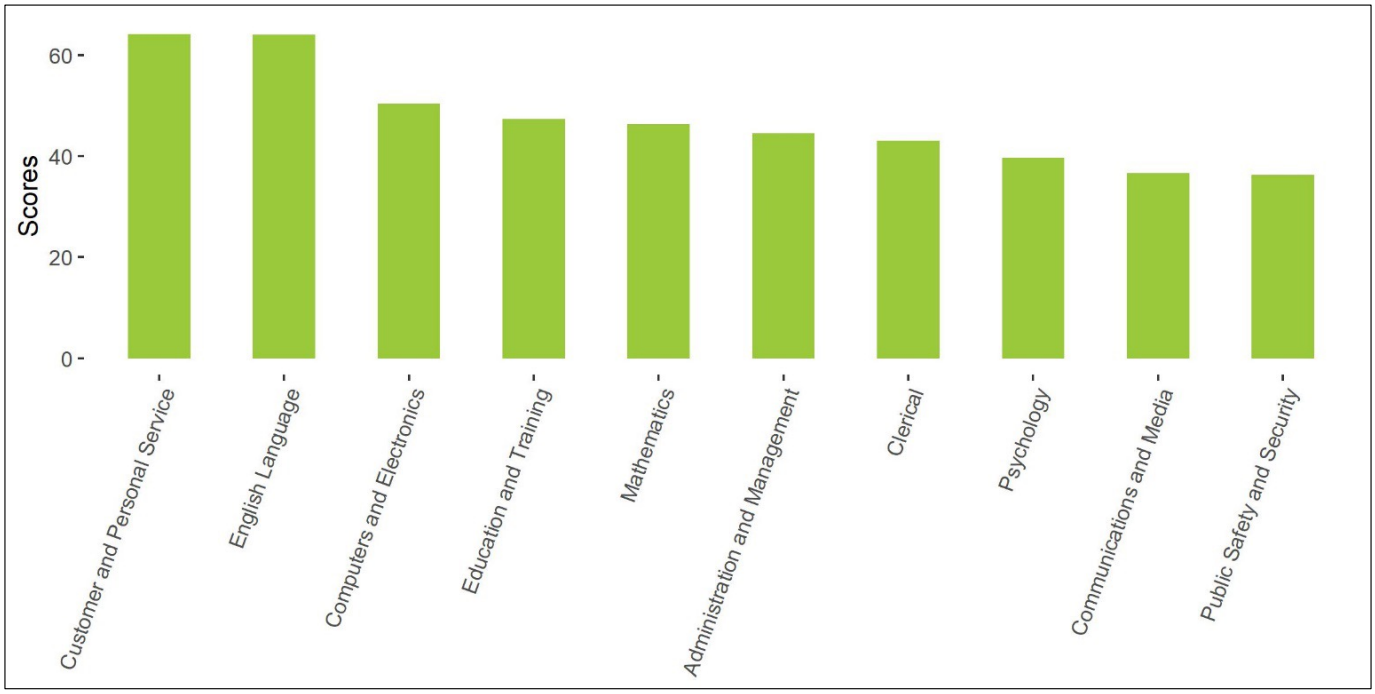
The needs of employers with respect to knowledge and technology skills are also available for each occupation in the labor market by the O*NET system (see https://www.onetonline.org/).

By using the content in the O*NET database, it is possible to analyze the knowledge and technology skills for individual occupations, occupational groups, or targeted occupations. The following is an analysis of occupations that are emerging, have rapid growth and have numerous job openings.

O*NET level and importance scores for the various knowledge topics were matched to the relevant occupational groups. The level and importance score were added together and standardized to a 100-point scale. Hot technologies are technology requirements often included in employer job postings. These are added across the relevant occupational groups to show the top ten most frequently mentioned hot technologies used to measure technology skills.

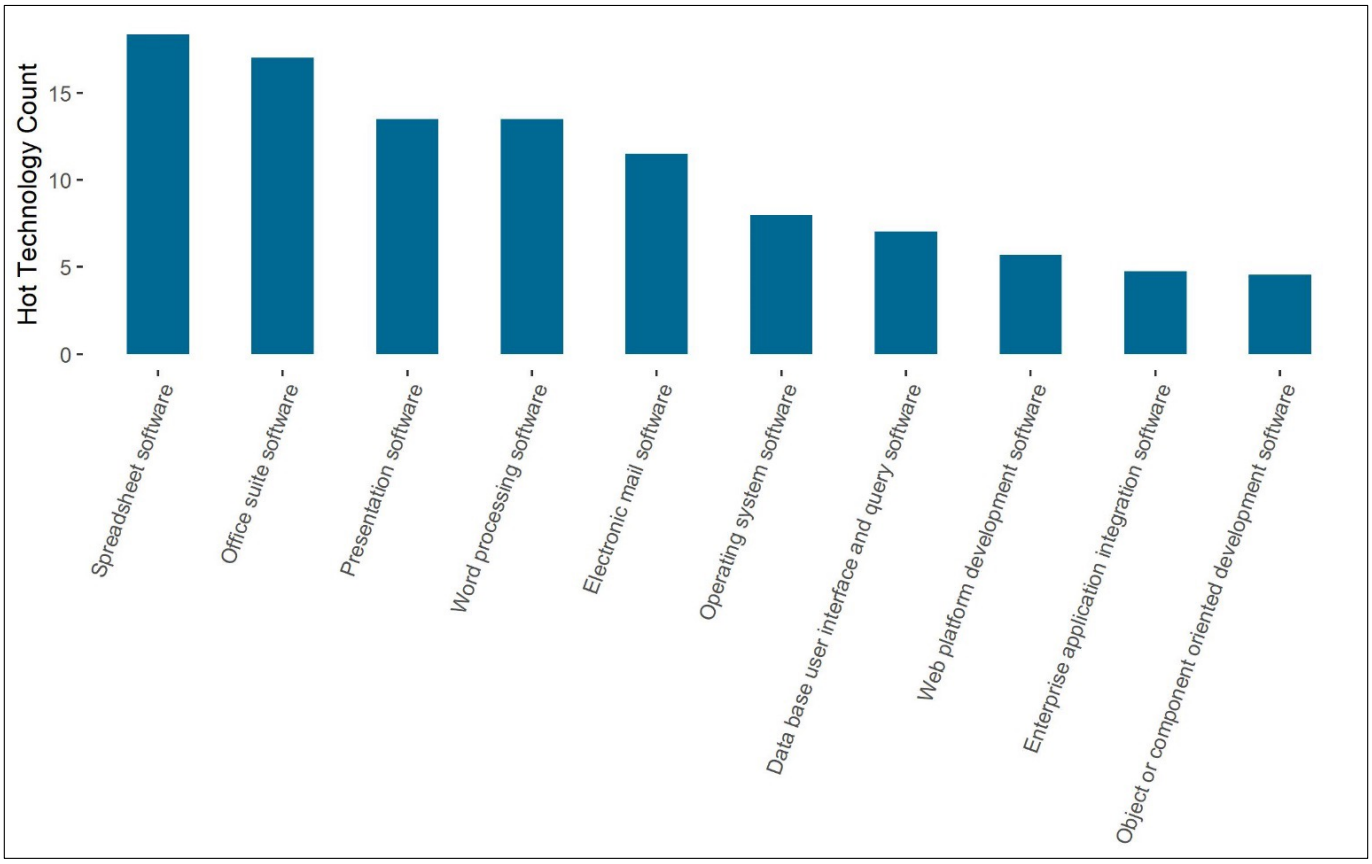
The highest knowledge scores for emerging occupations are Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Computers and Electronics, Education and Training, and Mathematics. Over half of the top emerging occupations list software for spreadsheets, Office suites, presentations, word processing, and electronic mail as hot technology skills.

Figure 2.31
Emerging Occupations Top Knowledge Scores



Source: O*NET and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, November 2021.

Figure 2.32
Emerging Occupations Top Technology Skills



Source: O*NET and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, November 2021.

Growing Occupations

The top occupations in the state's labor market can be represented in different ways. Below are two representations, the first showing the level of change (2021 – 2029) and the second showing percent change over the timeframe of the latest occupational projections (2021 – 2029). A compilation of knowledge and technology skills across these rankings are also provided.

Occupations Gaining the Most New Jobs

The occupations gaining the most new jobs represent a mix of occupations needed by tourism-related industries, healthcare, and business administration. Fast Food and Counter Workers (57,316 new jobs), Restaurant Cooks (40,201 new jobs), and Waiters and Waitresses (38,876 new jobs) are employed in tourism related industries. Registered Nurses (23,927 new jobs) and Medical Assistants (15,341 new jobs) are Healthcare occupations. Many of the top occupations with the most new jobs are commonly found across many different industries. These include General and Operations Managers (22,897 new jobs), Customer Service Representatives (18,892 new jobs), and Janitors and Cleaners (15,494 new jobs).

According to O*Net Education, Training, and Experience, five of the top twenty occupations that will gain the most new jobs from 2021 to 2029 require the majority to have a bachelor's degree or higher: Registered Nurses, Software Developers, General and Operations Managers, Project Management and Business Operations Specialists, and Market Research Analysts.

Figure 2.33
Occupations Projected to Gain the Most New Jobs in Florida

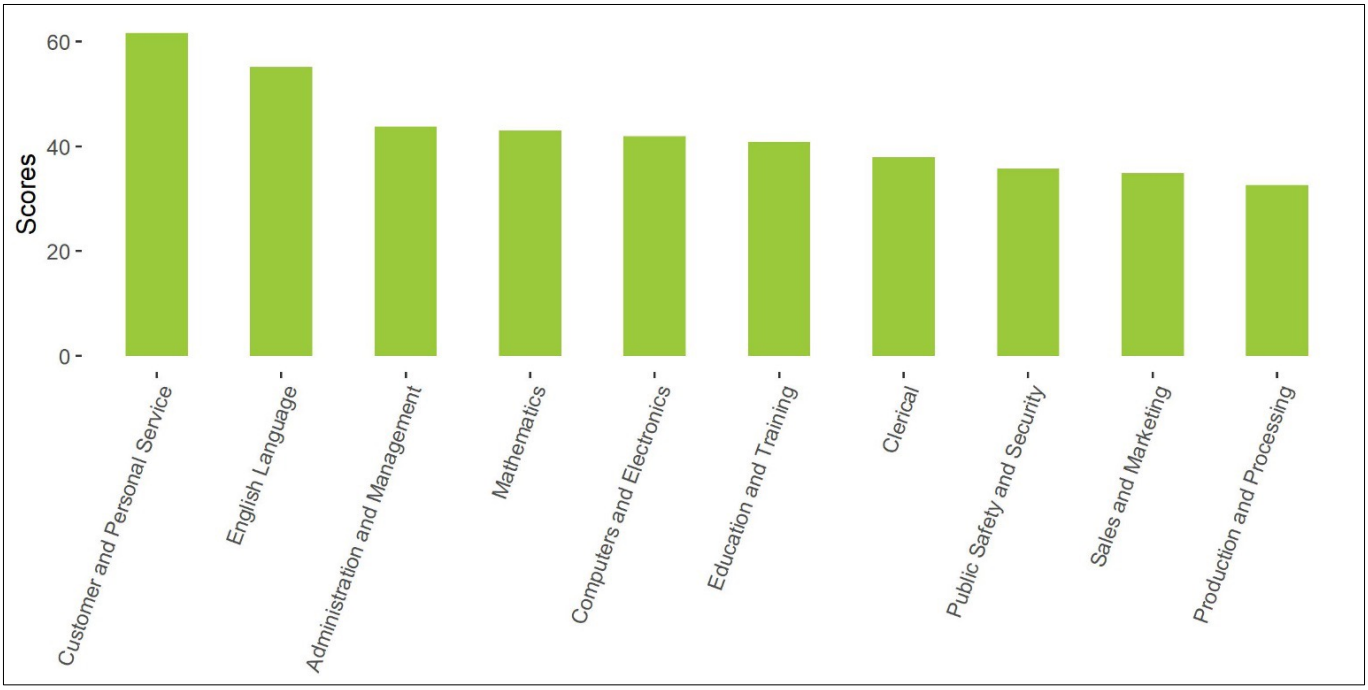
		Employment				
Code	Occupation	2021	2029	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent	Total Openings
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	224,286	281,602	57,316	25.6	426,493
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	301,266	344,325	43,059	14.3	381,117
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	105,954	146,155	40,201	37.9	170,642
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	189,890	228,766	38,876	20.5	331,902
29-1141	Registered Nurses	194,469	218,396	23,927	12.3	103,065
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	148,703	171,600	22,897	15.4	118,040
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	164,552	184,701	20,149	12.2	188,796
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts	64,827	84,868	20,041	30.9	56,759
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	266,499	285,391	18,892	7.1	281,835
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	108,169	126,700	18,531	17.1	129,173
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	77,564	93,559	15,995	20.6	100,557
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaner	123,997	139,491	15,494	12.5	143,644
31-9092	Medical Assistants	61,007	76,348	15,341	25.1	69,882
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	103,972	118,999	15,027	14.5	91,747
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	66,748	80,551	13,803	20.7	94,511
13-1198	Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists	90,851	104,551	13,700	15.1	80,613

Code	Occupation	2021	2029	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent	Total Openings
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	80,977	94,556	13,579	16.8	88,314
47-2061	Construction Laborers	100,298	113,820	13,522	13.5	93,191
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	140,320	152,681	12,361	8.8	150,880
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	42,915	54,783	11,868	27.7	46,488

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

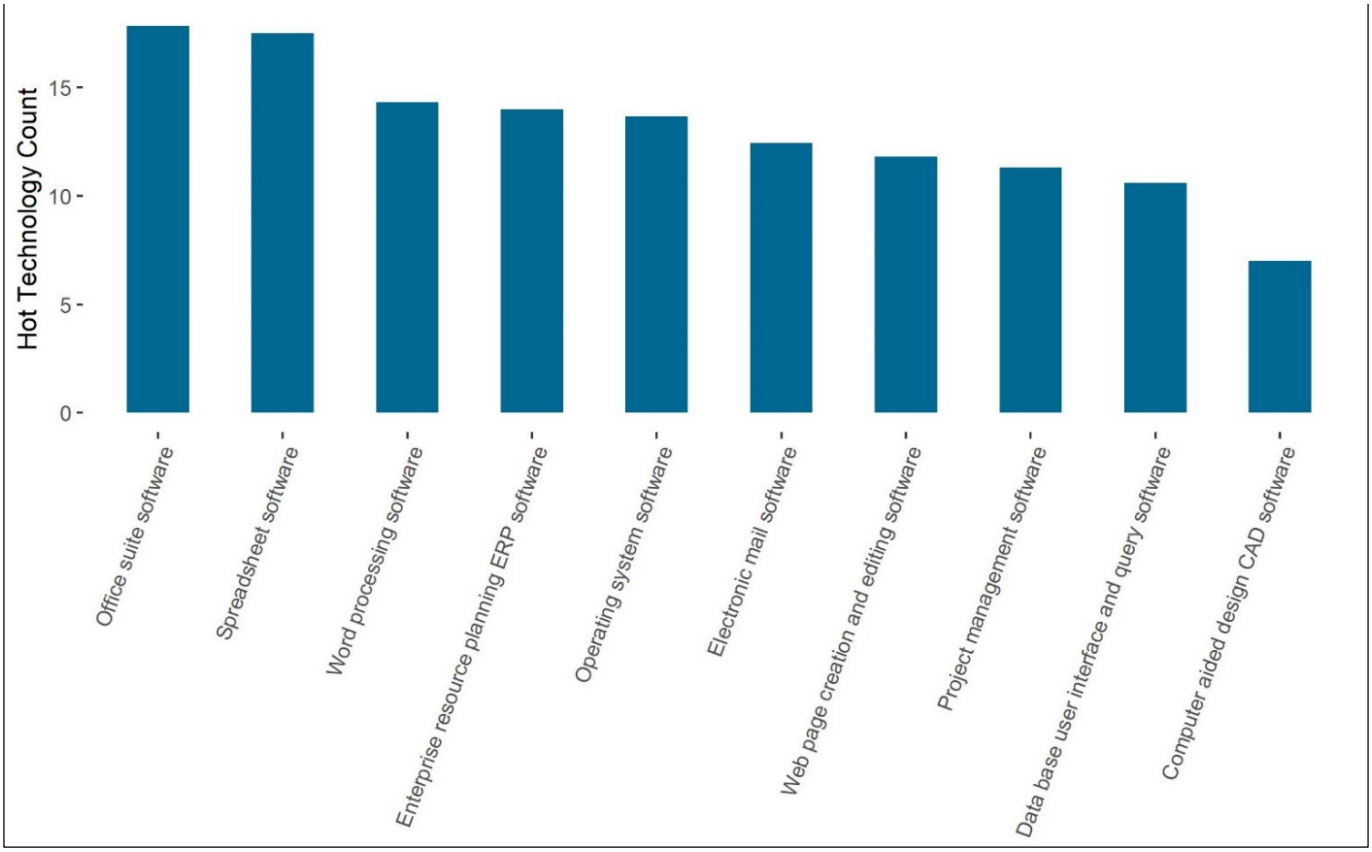
The highest knowledge scores for the occupations projected to have the most new job openings in from 2021-2029 are Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Administration and Management, Mathematics, and Computers and Electronics. Over fifteen of the twenty occupations have office suite and spreadsheet software as hot technologies.

Figure 2.34
Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Knowledge Scores



Source: O*NET and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, November 2021.

Figure 2.35
Occupations with the Most Job Openings Top Technology Skills



Source: O*NET and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, November 2021.

Fastest-Growing Occupations

Seven of the top 20 occupations ranked by percent change are in the health practitioner or healthcare support major occupational groups, while the rest have occupations in professional, scientific, and technical service industries. The fastest-growing occupation is Nurse Practitioners (13,333 jobs in 2021, +56.5 percent growth). The Cooks, Restaurant occupation is the largest on the top 20 list with 105,954 jobs in 2021. Some occupations that fall under professional, scientific, and technical services include software developers (64,827 jobs in 2021, +30.9 percent growth), Informational Security Analysts (6,980 jobs in 2021, +39.4 percent growth), and Market Research Analysts (42,915 jobs in 2021, +27.7 percent growth).

Occupations that were harder hit by the COVID-19 recession are projected to grow faster as they return to pre-pandemic levels, such as Cooks, Restaurant (105,954 jobs in 2021, +37.9 percent growth) and Amusement and Recreation Attendants (34,655 jobs in 2021, +28.2 percent growth).

According to O*Net Education, Training, and Experience, eight of the top twenty fastest growing occupations from 2021 to 2029 require the majority to have a bachelor's degree or higher: Nurse Practitioners, Information Security Analysts, Physician Assistants, Software Developers, Operations Research Analysts, Audio and Video Equipment Technicians, Market Research Analysts, and Veterinarians.

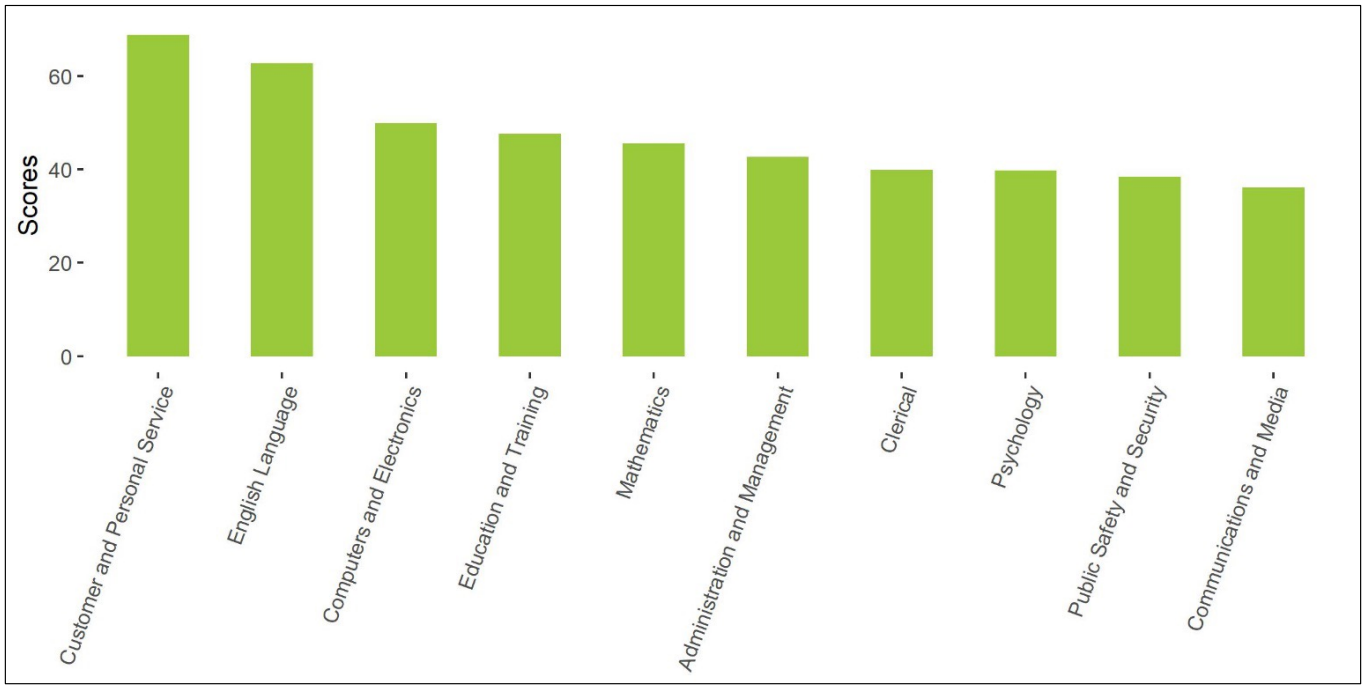
Figure 2.36
Fastest Growing Occupations in Florida (Minimum 4,000 Jobs in 2021)

		Employment				
Code	Occupation	2021	2029	2021-29 Change	2021-29 Percent	Total Openings
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	13,333	20,863	7,530	56.5	14,284
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	6,980	9,733	2,753	39.4	7,067
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	105,954	146,155	40,201	37.9	170,642
29-1071	Physician Assistants	7,201	9,913	2,712	37.7	6,242
39-2021	Nonfarm Animal Caretakers	17,852	24,169	6,317	35.4	30,382
39-6011	Baggage Porters and Bellhops	4,479	5,971	1,492	33.3	6,915
31-9011	Massage Therapists	11,586	15,263	3,677	31.7	14,518
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts	64,827	84,868	20,041	30.9	56,759
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	7,096	9,264	2,168	30.6	8,962
39-6012	Concierges	5,536	7,218	1,682	30.4	8,299
15-2031	Operations Research Analysts	4,903	6,349	1,446	29.5	4,099
27-4011	Audio and Video Equipment Technicians	6,223	8,031	1,808	29.1	7,462
53-6021	Parking Lot Attendants	13,899	17,827	3,928	28.3	21,672
39-3091	Amusement and Recreation Attendants	34,655	44,437	9,782	28.2	75,419
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	42,915	54,783	11,868	27.7	46,488
39-5094	Skincare Specialists	5,295	6,748	1,453	27.4	6,367
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	5,381	6,857	1,476	27.4	8,476
29-2056	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	8,648	10,994	2,346	27.1	8,164
29-1131	Veterinarians	5,417	6,882	1,465	27	3,017
39-3031	Ushers, Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers	7,105	8,954	1,849	26	16,123

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

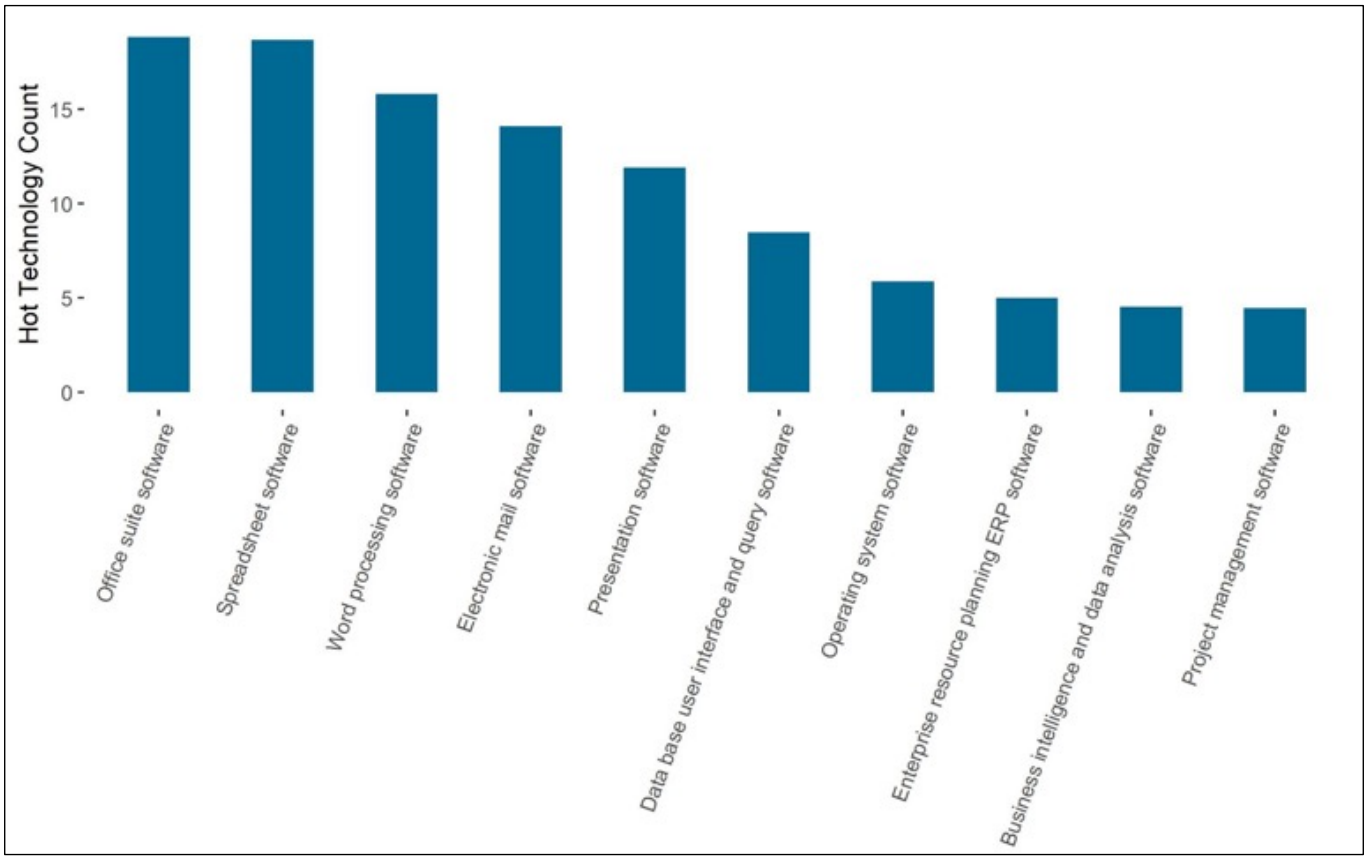
The highest knowledge scores for occupations projected to grow the fastest between 2021 and 2029 are Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Computers and Electronics, Education and Training and Mathematics. Over fifteen of the twenty occupations have Office suite, spreadsheet, and word processing software as hot technologies.

Figure 2.37
Rapid Growth Occupations Top Knowledge Scores



Source: O*NET and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, November 2021.

Figure 2.38
Rapid Growth Occupational Top Technology Skills



Source: O*NET and Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Prepared by the Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, November 2021.

Declining or Slow-Growth Occupations

Many declining or slow-growth occupations are being replaced by technological advancement or slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the list includes Door-to-Door Sales Worker and Teller occupations as well as Typist and Packaging occupations. According to O*Net Education, Training, and Experience, none of the top twenty declining or slow-growth occupations from 2021 to 2029 typically require a bachelor's degree or higher. Thirteen out of the top twenty declining or slow-growth occupations only need a high school diploma or equivalent.

Figure 2.39
Declining or Slow-Growth Occupations in Florida

Code	Occupation	2021 Employment	2029 Employment	2021-29 Level Change	2021-29 Percent Change	Total Job Openings
33-3041	Parking Enforcement Workers	445	330	-115	-25.8	109
43-9022	Word Processors and Typists	1,586	1,194	-392	-24.7	849
49-9064	Watch Repairers	230	181	-49	-21.3	104
19-4051	Nuclear Technicians	194	158	-36	-18.6	119
43-9021	Data Entry Keyers	11,734	10,116	-1,618	-13.8	7,128
43-6012	Legal Secretaries	10,140	8,791	-1,349	-13.3	6,376
51-9031	Cutters and Trimmers, Hand	177	157	-20	-11.3	117
43-2011	Switchboard Operators, Including Answering Service	4,853	4,338	-515	-10.6	3,201
51-4022	Forging Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	201	181	-20	-10	112
43-6011	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistant	27,418	24,957	-2,461	-9	18,912
41-9091	Door-to-Door Sales Workers, News and Street Vendors, and Related Workers	4,296	3,957	-339	-7.9	3,544
43-3071	Tellers	25,414	23,555	-1,859	-7.3	18,708
49-2096	Electronic Equipment Installers and Repairers, Motor Vehicle	473	441	-32	-6.8	324
51-9022	Grinding and Polishing Workers, Hand	534	498	-36	-6.7	386
51-8013	Power Plant Operators	1,326	1,237	-89	-6.7	750
31-9095	Pharmacy Aides	1,814	1,702	-112	-6.2	1,432
27-1023	Floral Designers	2,965	2,790	-175	-5.9	1,805
43-4071	File Clerks	9,021	8,525	-496	-5.5	7,293
51-4035	Milling and Planing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	729	691	-38	-5.2	474
53-7064	Packers and Packagers, Hand	35,604	33,821	-1,783	-5	33,249

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Occupational and Industry Employment Projections 2021-2029.

(2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis

(A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

An analysis of Florida's workforce development activities demonstrates a broad range of services offered to Florida residents. The state's WIOA core partners **– CareerSource Florida; the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO); and the Florida Department of Education's Divisions of Blind Services (FDBS), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Career and Adult Education (DCAE)** – provide services that assist the state in delivering workforce, education, and training activities in a cohesive manner.

Career Centers
Within the CareerSource Florida network, Florida's career centers are designed to deliver and provide access to services for employers seeking qualified workers, as well as training for new and existing employees and all job seekers.

Florida's comprehensive career centers provide expanded services and access to core and required partner programs either through colocation of partners or linkages to partner services. Florida's career centers provide access to all individuals, including veterans, TANF recipients, SNAP recipients, and persons with disabilities.

Services are also available to Floridians and businesses through affiliate sites or specialized centers in areas strategically located within other community partners' facilities such as local chambers, libraries, and community-based organizations. All of Florida's career centers are easily identified through their use of the CareerSource Florida network brand and the designation as "A proud partner of the American Job Center network."

In addition to services offered through comprehensive career centers, affiliate sites and specialized centers, several LWDBs deploy mobile career centers to provide services to Florida's businesses, job seekers and workers to support special events. Mobile career centers are also deployed to areas where access to services may be challenging. Major emphasis is placed on providing services directly at employer sites and direct service delivery in rural communities through mobile career centers, a cost-effective and customer-friendly service solution. Mobile career centers also play an integral role in providing services and assistance after hurricanes and other disaster events.

WIOA emphasizes the importance of serving the business customer. The CareerSource Florida network is a key resource for businesses seeking qualified workers and grants for customized training for new or existing employees. All 24 LWDBs have established dedicated business services teams who partner closely with Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation business relations teams. In several cases, designated career centers are situated in business districts to help local employers recruit, train, and retain workers.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, career centers throughout Florida quickly deployed remote and virtual career services utilizing a variety of tools including Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Career EDGE, and many more. At the direction of the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, the state secured the platform Premier Virtual which enabled the 24 LWDBs to host virtual job fairs. These platforms allowed the CareerSource Florida network to not only continue services to Floridians and businesses, but also to enhance the level of service. As businesses and job seekers adapt to a new service landscape in every industry, the state board will continue to support opportunities and initiatives that bring services directly to the consumer.

Communications Tools

CareerSource Florida's statewide communications and outreach plan aligns with CareerSource Florida's three corporate goals: communicate the CareerSource Florida network vision to enhance thought leadership, strategies, and policies that strengthen excellence to Florida businesses, job seekers, and workers; leverage strategic partnerships to cultivate local, regional, and state capacity-building that increases economic opportunity; and emphasize data-driven decisions to keep Florida's workforce system accountable by encouraging performance achievement and boosting talent pipeline alignment.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic required Florida's state workforce system to place an even greater emphasis on digital communication and social media as the CareerSource Florida network reached out to support Floridians who had lost jobs and employers who needed to pivot in their operations to stay in business. CareerSource Florida launched a statewide outreach campaign, Help is Here, targeting both employers and individuals, particularly those who had never worked with the CareerSource Florida network, to help them connect with their LWDBs virtually, by appointment, and in person as available. The campaign has been widely shared, and more than half of Florida's 24 local workforce development boards have customized it for regional outreach.

Another statewide outreach campaign, the award-winning Apprentice Florida campaign, seeks to raise awareness of the benefits of the time-tested apprenticeship model for both employers and apprentices. Outreach includes the Apprentice Florida website at apprenticeflorida.com, several downloadable outreach materials with data and statistics about the benefits of apprenticeships, outreach toolkits for businesses and for the CareerSource Florida network staff, production of outreach videos featuring actual apprentices and business leaders involved in registered apprenticeships, development of a shareable social media outreach collection and paid advertising including graphic design and placements across multiple platforms.

Additional CareerSource Florida communications tools include timely and relevant updates on workforce system issues and news, frequent electronic messages from the president and CEO of CareerSource Florida to the CareerSource Florida Board, DEO, and LWDBs; regularly scheduled and special legislative updates; and news releases and special alerts as necessary.

CareerSource Florida developed and implemented a statewide Cooperative Outreach Program as an investment in brand-compliant, strategic outreach tools and tactics that could be leveraged by LWDBs to augment existing local outreach strategies. The initiative supports local boards' efforts to reach job-seeking customers, reconnect with previously served customers, and connect with new businesses.

CareerSource Florida's statewide Cooperative Outreach Program has had strong results since its inception. All 24 local workforce development boards have participated.

CareerSource Florida's strategic, integrated outreach, including the Cooperative Outreach Program with LWDBs, has contributed to significant increases in awareness of the state workforce system. Market surveys conducted in August 2021 revealed specific characteristics of job seekers throughout the state across age group, gender, level of education, race/ethnicity, and region. Of job seekers 25 and older, just under half – 49% – of survey respondents say they have used the CareerSource Florida network to look for a job or are aware and knowledgeable of the CareerSource Florida network. Internet searches, followed by word of mouth, website usage, referral by government agency and social media are the primary ways, in order, that people report learning about the CareerSource Florida network, demonstrating the opportunities and value of ongoing investments in paid digital outreach.

More than half of the respondents reported they would be likely to use CareerSource Florida network resources on their next job. Additional youth-specific surveys conducted in February 2021 revealed of youth aged 16-24 who were aware of the network, 56% were likely to use the network as a resource in their job search. Employers were also surveyed to identify the resources they used when recruiting for open positions and how aware they were of the CareerSource Florida network services. Of those who have used the CareerSource Florida network in the past, two out of three would use the network for the next recruiting search.

Survey findings point to numerous opportunities for more targeted outreach, the importance of continued outreach, and opportunities for more customized messaging. The data gleaned from these surveys will inform future communications and outreach plans to identify populations who can most benefit from workforce programs.

To improve communication with visually impaired customers, the Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) uses screen reader/magnification software, such as JAWS and ZoomText, and text size/text contrast toggle controls to make the Division's website accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Prospective clients can complete online applications in both English and Spanish. Clients can request printed materials in large print and Braille.

The FDBS is involved in several projects to increase program awareness. Proposed outreach and marketing tools include radio and billboard ads, website reconstruction, program brochure and division logo redesign, and See Different Initiative webinars.

Employ Florida: Online Workforce Services and Virtual Career Center

Today's job seekers and businesses expect and need access to workforce services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Employ Florida website (employflorida.com) is Florida's virtual job-matching tool, a resource providing access at no charge to employment opportunities, resume-building aids, and other services. Employ Florida helps connect employers, job seekers, and Floridians looking to grow in their careers.

Employ Florida is the state's most comprehensive source for current Florida job openings. Launched in 2005, Employ Florida provides businesses with access to thousands of current resumes, recruiting and hiring resources, valuable information on training options, and links to labor market information at both the state and local levels. Florida's job seekers can search for employment opportunities from numerous job and corporate websites as well as those placed on Employ Florida directly by businesses or through LWDBs and/or career centers. Employers and job seekers can locate Florida's workforce services and resources anywhere in the state via Employ Florida or by calling the toll-free Customer Information Center, which is staffed by DEO.

Employ Florida is consistently upgraded to maintain relevancy and incorporate improved technology. The use of micro-portals, powered by Employ Florida, provides specialized and targeted job matching to add value for both employers and job seekers with specific interests and needs. CareerSource Florida and DEO, in collaboration with LWDBs and other partners, maintain dedicated entry points with customized job search information and resources. These resources have included portals for Florida veterans, job seekers age 50 or older, those interested in green jobs, people with disabilities, recent college graduates, and people and businesses impacted by specific events such as hurricanes.

The Florida Abilities Work portal is a tool for employers and job seekers with disabilities. The micro-portal is housed on the Employ Florida website with a logo button for ease of access. The portal was specifically designed to provide resources to people with disabilities and to assist employers who are interested

in hiring. A help desk and hotline are staffed by Vocational Rehabilitation. The portal was developed in response to the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities collaboratively with input from several partners including the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, VR and Division of Blind Services (FDBS) and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council as well as customers and family members.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant

Florida's JVSG program creates opportunities for all eligible veterans and eligible spouses to obtain meaningful and successful careers through the provision of resources and expertise that maximize employment opportunities and protect veterans' employment rights. Services provided by Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) staff include, but are not limited to, comprehensive assessments, development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), career counseling, and referrals to veteran and community organizations as needed. The Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) is a fully integrated member of the LWDB Business Services Team (BST). LVER staff promote the hiring veterans to employers, employer associations, and business groups; facilitate employer training, plan and participate in career fairs and conduct job development contacts on behalf of veterans with employers.

Employment and Training Activities for SNAP and TANF Recipients

The Florida Legislature appropriates TANF funds to DEO and charges it with providing administrative and program guidance for the merged workforce and TANF/Welfare Transition (WT) program support delivery system. Section 445.024, F.S. contains Florida's work activity requirements that ensure work eligible adults and minor heads of household that received Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)(funded by TANF) are engaged in work in accordance with section 407 of the Social Security Act as amended by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Florida's 24 LWDBs provide direct workforce services to TANF recipients through Florida's WT program. The LWDBs are responsible for implementing the state's workforce programs, including WT and other TANF non-assistance programs.

Local workforce development boards offer the following categories of work activities, individually or in combination, to ensure TCA recipients satisfy their work requirements:

- Unsubsidized employment
- Subsidized private sector employment
- Subsidized public sector employment
- On-the-job training
- Community service programs
- Work experience
- Job search and job readiness assistance
- Vocational educational training
- Job skills training directly related to employment
- Education directly related to employment
- Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or in a course of study leading to a graduate equivalency diploma

Additionally, WIOA services are made available to TCA recipients as needed.

Florida's SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program is administered by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF executes an interagency agreement with DEO for the delivery of E&T services through Florida's workforce development system. As part of the interagency agreement, DCF identifies Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) and refers these individuals to DEO for participation in the SNAP E&T program. Florida's SNAP E&T program is operated statewide and is mandatory only to ABAWDs to assist them in gaining skills, training and/or work experience that will increase their ability to directly move into employment. The following SNAP E&T program components are made available to ABAWDs through Florida's LWDBs:

- Supervised job search
- Job search training
- Work experience
- Education
- Vocational training
- Other services include work services available under the WIOA and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs.

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers
Under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Workers program assists workers who have been laid off or whose jobs have been threatened (e.g., reduced hours or reduced wages) because of foreign trade or competition. The worker group must be certified as eligible for TAA by the U.S Department of Labor. The TAA program provides resources to help trade- affected workers obtain new skills and find suitable employment. The program provides training resulting in marketable skills and/or credentials, employment and case management services, income support for trade-affected workers enrolled in training, job search allowances, relocation allowances, wage subsidies for reemployed trade-affected workers over the age of fifty, and a federal health insurance tax credit.

As directed by the State Trade Program, Local TAA Coordinators provide comprehensive and specialized assessments, labor market information, pre-vocational training, individual and group career counseling, networking workshops, interviewing coaching, resume writing assistance, and computer literacy assistance. Rapid reemployment into suitable employment is the preferred approach. When appropriate, Local TAA Coordinators screen, prepare, and approve workers for training to ensure successful competition of the training program. Local TAA Coordinators ensure the training is feasible, realistic, achievable, and time-bound and only approve training in a growing industry.

The State Trade Program provides TAA employer services including employer informational sessions, Trade Act petition navigation and filing assistance, and serves as the liaison between the employer and the U.S. Department of Labor. The State Trade Program hosts TAA workgroups for local staff, provides training and public outreach, manages online guidance and content, reviews performance data, and reconciles the program's local expenditures and financial data for federal reporting.

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Workforce Development Activities
Activities for youth and students are designed to assist in developing a concept of work, navigating the community and obtaining work experience during high school. Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities or potentially eligible students include career exploration counseling, work readiness and self-advocacy training, and experiential activities such as community-based work experience and on-the-job training. Support services available to eligible students with disabilities or youth with disabilities include assistive technology and services, transportation, and uniforms. Intensive services are designed for those who need additional support with appropriate work behavior, require repetition to acquire skills, or need to build endurance to work and identify the right fit or environment for work. These services include Discovery, Youth Peer Mentoring, Project SEARCH, services provided under Work-Based Learning Experiences with school districts and tuition, and books and supplies for postsecondary education programs.

VR offers services for adults (and youth, if needed to achieve job goals) that include vocational and other assessments to help job seekers best define their job goals. If needed to meet their goal, medical and psychological services are obtained. VR helps job seekers obtain educational or job readiness training to prepare for their career. Job search, placement, coaching, supported employment and self-employment services are available, as well as interpretive, assistive and rehabilitation technology services. VR maintains a vast network of contracted employment service providers throughout the state and has initiatives in place to increase the variety and quantity of services offered.

VR has formalized a Business Relations Program, with the vision to build and sustain partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. These partnerships lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR customers. Efforts are under way to further develop and customize services to employers, create strategic partnerships to support workforce needs and establish an employment-focused culture within the rehabilitation process.

In Program Year 20-21, VR achieved important gains compared to the previous year with no pandemic impact on services:

- For every $1.00 spent on VR services, $8.73 is returned to the Florida economy.
- 12,435 students with disabilities received Pre-Employment Transition Services, a 20 percent increase over last year.
- 47 schools are providing Work-Based Learning Experiences, and 3,317 students with disabilities received Work-Based Learning experiences, a 132 percent increase over pre-pandemic levels.
- 1,061 students received workplace readiness training, a seven percent increase over pre-pandemic levels.
- VR continues to lead the nation with 46 Project SEARCH providers across the state.
- 2,301 students with disabilities received Instruction in Self-Advocacy. Median earnings for VR customers continue to increase each year.
- The VR Measurable Skill Gain rate was 28.2 percent, surpassing the negotiated rate by more than 10 percent.

Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) Workforce Development Activities
The programs under the FDBS are designed to provide training in foundational skills, independent living skills, and career development to assist individuals with visual impairments in becoming self-sufficient in their homes and communities while progressing toward their individual goals. Activities for adults served under the Vocational Rehabilitation Program help individuals who are blind or visually impaired to gain, maintain, advance in, or retain employment. A plan is developed for each individual to provide the education, training, equipment and skills needed for success. Vocational rehabilitation counselors, local community rehabilitation programs, the Rehabilitation Center, and vocational schools/colleges (via sponsorships) provide services.

In FY 2020, the FDBS served 11,613 consumers. Of this number, 4,928 received employment services under the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and 890 obtained competitive integrated employment.

Beginning at the age of 14, the Division offers Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities who are potentially eligible for services. At the same age, eligible students or youth with disabilities can receive transition services. These services consist of a coordinated set of activities for students that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, competitive integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, or independent living. Students and youth are given the tools necessary to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment consistent with their unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice.

The FDBS conducted a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to determine the needs of employers in recruiting, hiring, accommodating, and retaining individuals with blindness or visual impairments. Based on these needs, with continual collaboration among core partners – FDBS will conduct the following activities to expand, integrate, and improve services to individuals with visual disabilities within the workforce system.

- Secure opportunities for students/youth with disabilities to practice and improve workplace skills. This includes increasing participation of young adults (ages 18-34) in the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). The BEP enrolled 9 young adults during SFY 2020-2021. Due to COVID-19 concerns, some facilities are closed or experienced a reduction in business, which limited options for work experiences and on-the-job training.
- Increase utilization of online job systems/portals to expose employers to job-ready consumers. Use of the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) is part of the conversation between counselors and clients during the ongoing vocational rehabilitation process. All Employment Placement Specialists (EPS) completed the first part of training for the portal. The EPS and all employment program staff participated in the National TAP presentation, which led to an increase in the number of published resumes.
- Increase consumer participation in industry certifications and apprenticeships and develop improved mechanisms for tracking. The FDBS has a pilot project with the Miami Lighthouse and Beacon Council to increase participation in apprenticeship programs. During the project's early inception, three individuals with visual impairments participated in programs that may lead to permanent job placements. Current activities involve creating an FDBS sponsored apprenticeship with industry certification for a Web Accessibility Specialist.

- Develop and implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Rehabilitation Center. The Rehabilitation Center provides employment training under the Pre-Employment Program (PEP) and Energize for Employment (EEP) programs. The PEP focuses on preparing clients for the workforce by training clients on interviewing, completing applications, professional presentation, etc. The EEP provides refreshers on skills obtained during the PEP.
- Increase awareness of and the provision of accessibility tools. In 2020, the FDBS finalized a license agreement with Vispero making it the first state in the nation to provide access to assistive technology to its citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The agreement allows FDBS to supply clients and workforce partners with licenses for Jaws, ZoomText, and Fusion.
- Develop and strengthen employer relationships by providing employer training, support, education, and resources. The FDBS has dedicated staff in the local districts who provide sensitivity and blind etiquette training and offer resources to employers as needed. The Statewide Business Consultant is a member of the National Employment Team (NET) for additional support.
- Increase successful employment outcomes including self-employment for transition-age youth, adults, and seniors. Successful employment outcomes increased from 822 in 2019 to 890 in 2020. This is the highest number of clients who obtained competitive integrated employment than any prior year. This achievement is equally impressive considering the circumstances and barriers created by the coronavirus.
- Strengthen statewide collaboration with core partners.
- Develop mechanisms to maximize job placement effectiveness of the Employment Placement Specialists and contracted service providers. The FDBS created a toolkit for community rehabilitation providers and employers to utilize during outreach activities. The Employment Placement Specialists refer to a desk manual for tips on engaging employers and initiating conversations regarding employment opportunities.

Education and Training Activities for Adult Education

Florida's adult education system provides academic instruction to build skills in reading, writing, math, English language and Civics education, in order to prepare learners to attain a secondary diploma and beyond. The focus on Integrated Education and Training will provide adults with an accelerated path to gain the academic and occupational skills needed to move into a high skill, high wage career. The state of Florida has aligned content standards for adult education with state- adopted academic standards. Below are the numbers of adult education students served over the past years.

2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
169,308	153,246	145,932	130,105	83,537

Training activities are provided statewide through face-to-face and online workshops, webinars and conferences. Needs assessments are conducted to assist in determining state professional development priorities. Current initiatives determine training topics such as college and career readiness standards, integrated education and training models, essential components of reading instruction, career pathways, mathematics instruction and GED® preparation.

Adult education programs will collaborate with LWDBs to determine local high-wage, high-demand careers when developing career pathways.

One-stop career center partners and adult education programs work collaboratively within their local areas and assessment and instructional services are often provided onsite. Local CareerSource Florida network staff can participate in Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) trainings that are made available throughout the year. Many career centers provide representatives directly to the adult education facility to provide counseling, advising and other services related to awareness of workforce resources. The sharing of cross-referral outcomes is a priority of DCAE to support the goals of WIOA and increase student access and achievement.

(b) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

As is outlined in section 2(A) above, Florida's workforce network partners continue to reach and serve customers to put Floridians to work. These partnerships are leveraged at the state and local levels to enhance any areas where improvements are needed. The strength of Florida's workforce network is demonstrated through its existing relationships and the ongoing effort to identify additional opportunities for coordinated service delivery as required under WIOA. With the passage of the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, Florida's legislators have demonstrated a commitment to strengthening not only the state-level partnerships among workforce and education entities, but also creating systems and structures to ensure that all entities are coordinated when serving employers and job seekers. The REACH Act aligns and continues the work supporting the Governor's goal that Florida will be number one in the nation for workforce education.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges to the workforce system. With the support of the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, the CareerSource Florida network quickly deployed remote resources to ensure continuity of service provision throughout the state. Platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Premier Virtual, and others were utilized to provide services to employers and job seekers alike. As Florida's recovery continues, the workforce system must assess and adapt service delivery to meet the evolving needs of both employers and job seekers.

Florida's labor force has reached pre-pandemic levels and while the number of jobs has not yet reached their pre-pandemic levels, tremendous progress has been made in making jobs available and Florida employers now face challenges in meeting their talent needs as the number of job openings exceeds the number of job seekers available to fill those positions. While Florida's economy has rebounded, areas of opportunity exist where recovery is slower. Leisure and hospitality, Florida's largest industry sector, and retail trade, for example, are experiencing slower job recovery than other industries. Recovery appears slower in the critical metropolitan statistical areas and divisions of Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford and Miami-Miami Beach-Kendall. Employment projections indicate that job growth in leisure and hospitality will rapidly increase through 2029.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Florida received an increase in federal and state funding to assist in the state's recovery. This increase in resources provided strong opportunities for partnerships among Florida's workforce and education partners to align initiatives focused on rapid credentialing and providing increased student supports. It is incumbent upon the partners to continue finding ways to braid or coordinate new funding opportunities to assist Florida's job seekers and employers and continue economic recovery.

Florida's LWDBs face challenges with enrolling participants in workforce development programs as enrollment numbers have not yet rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. The workforce system identified that typical customers required additional assistance beyond what was considered normal pre-pandemic. To

address these issues, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors approved and implemented strategic policies at its February 2021 board meeting to allow local boards to increase use of supportive services and needs-related payments. The impact of these policies will continue to be assessed in the coming year.

Key demographics that were disparately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic include youth, especially minority youth, and represent an opportunity for impact moving into the next year.

Removing barriers to alignment and coordination among workforce programs is a primary focus for the workforce system and the REACH Act. As such, the state is continuing the integration of SNAP E&T and TANF case management into the state's labor exchange and case management system. The project is projected to be completed in 2022. Furthermore, the REACH Act, which became effective July 1, 2021, requires DEO, in coordination with the Department of Education and Department of Children and Families, to implement a consumer-first workforce system which effectively would combine or align data systems among key WIOA partners. To avoid redundancy, increase efficiencies and avoid duplication of customer entry, this consumer-first workforce system will integrate information from DEO, Department of Education, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Florida Division of Blind Services, and the Department of Children and Families. A feasibility study was commissioned in Summer 2021 and the results will guide future efforts toward system integration.

Additional improvements are taking place in Florida's workforce network, including a Residential Center training program within the FDBS. The Pre-Employment Program began in 2016 with the goal to increase the employment rates for youth and adults. During the beginning of the pandemic, the Rehabilitation Center postponed all in-person classes and residential training. Classes moved to an online platform in September 2020 and have since resumed in person. The Center created the Energize for Employment Program in 2020 and began online classes in October. The Vocational Independent Skills Program (VISP), formerly the Independent Living Skills Program, is conducted both online and on campus. The VISP focuses on enhancing independent living skills, while preparing clients for future employment.

Employer biases and misconceptions about hiring individuals who are blind due to their lack of knowledge regarding the skills/abilities of these individuals continue to exist. There is a lack of information regarding ADA requirements and issues with accessibility for job sites, both building (physical) and individual (personal) accessibilities. The EPS and Business Consultant provide training to employers that help dispel these myths and stereotypes to increase hiring of individuals with disabilities of all types.

Florida is working to address accessibility of job network computer systems, outreach and community visibility for programs that serve job seekers with disabilities and transportation for job seekers with disabilities.

(c) State Workforce Development Capacity

Florida is well-positioned to continue delivering exceptional workforce development services with the knowledge and experience of Florida's WIOA core program partners. Continued communication and enhanced collaboration among the WIOA State Leadership Team and working groups remain a primary focus as the partners collectively build the capacity of the state's workforce system as required under the REACH Act.

Capacity also depends on the continued success of Florida's 24 local workforce development boards and over 100 career centers. Florida's comprehensive career centers provide expanded services and access to

core and required partner programs either through colocation of partners or linkages to partner services. Florida's career centers can provide access to all individuals, including veterans, TCA recipients, SNAP recipients, and persons with disabilities. Services are also available to Florida's citizens and businesses through affiliate sites or specialized career centers in areas strategically located within other community partners' facilities such as local chambers, libraries, and community-based organizations. In addition to services offered through comprehensive career centers, affiliate sites, and specialized centers, several LWDBs deploy mobile career centers and other remote services to engage Florida's businesses, workers, and job seekers and support special events.

Local boards and their WIOA partners constantly strive to develop innovative methods for delivery of services to job seekers and employers in their local areas. A heightened focus on customer service and business engagement is helping to provide visibility into ways to increase Florida's workforce network capacity. To improve upon this effective strategy of measurement and analysis, Florida is recreating its Business Services Dashboard using innovative tools such as Salesforce's Customer Relationship Management platform and Microsoft BI. These new tools will enhance the current dashboard by providing greater real time information to state leaders, board of directors, local boards and partners on important data elements, such as number of businesses served, number of high-value services provided to businesses and number of projected trainees through state-level training grants by industry sectors and local workforce development board areas.

As previously discussed in this plan, many opportunities for innovation were presented as the state workforce system changed its approach to service delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Certain innovations, such as purchasing software to engage with customers remotely and virtual job fair platforms, remain in place today.

Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) currently has 96 unit offices throughout Florida; 20 percent of those are private contracted offices, opened to increase its service capacity and ensure continuity of services. Factors such as staff turnover and Order of Selection (OOS) waitlists affect customer service capacity and VR's leadership uses data projection models to monitor trends and guide decision-making regarding fiscal, caseload and waitlist performance.

VR partners with employment service providers and maintains memorandums of agreement with multiple agencies and entities around the state to ensure comprehensive and coordinated services are provided for job seekers with disabilities. VR implements pilot programs capacity. VR places emphasis on increasing provider capacity for specialized services such as Discovery and Customized Employment.

VR's services are provided statewide with the exception of pilot programs, Innovation and Expansion project activities and transition services delivered under Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE). VR currently holds WBLE with 31 school districts and, as required, has a statewide waiver in place for these arrangements. More details on WBLE and other factors that affect VR's service capacity can be found in the VR services portion of this plan.

The FDBS has 10 district and 5 satellite offices throughout the state. There are approximately 160 employees located in the district offices and state headquarters. Employees are aligned to coordinate, implement and track workforce development activities across multiple programs. The FDBS conducts ongoing assessments of training needs to ensure compliance with federal and state mandates and examines individual personnel training requirements related to current or future job requirements.

The Division coordinates with all core partners and maintains memorandums of agreement with CareerSource Florida centers around the state to deliver comprehensive and coordinated services to job-seeking individuals who are visually impaired. The FDBS has long-established relationships with statewide Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) who provide direct vocational rehabilitation, transition, supported employment and rehabilitation engineering services to clients statewide. T FDBS implements the identified workforce development activities through existing staff and CRPs outlined in Section X.

Adult education programs in Florida are provided by school districts, colleges and community-based organizations. While some counties may not offer adult education programs, colleges in those service areas were awarded federal grants to provide adult education programs in those areas. There are 202 locations offering adult education services. This includes main sites and satellite programs located throughout the community. Transportation is a barrier for many adults, so local programs plan locations that are accessible for potential adult students.

(d) State Strategic Vision and Goals

(1) Vision

Florida's strategic vision is an integrated, consumer-first workforce development system that is the best in the nation. Through the implementation of WIOA, Florida has a business-led, market-responsive, results-oriented and integrated workforce development system. The enhanced system fosters customer service excellence, seeks continuous improvement and demonstrates value by enhancing employment opportunities for all individuals. Focused and deliberate collaboration between education, workforce and economic development networks maximizes the competitiveness of businesses and the productivity of the state's workforce. This increases opportunities and economic prosperity.

In 2021, the Florida Legislature unanimously passed the Reimagine Education and Career Help (REACH) Act which further codifies the intent of WIOA in Florida law. The REACH Act increases collaboration among key state-level partners, CareerSource Florida, the Department of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Education, and the Department of Children and Families to improve access to workforce programs for all Floridians, increase accountability by focusing on outcomes, and ensure alignment of the workforce system to the needs of Florida employers.

(2) Goals

Florida's goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, to meet employers' need for a skilled workforce, are below. These broad goals are designed to achieve the strategic vision:

- Enhance alignment and market responsiveness of workforce, education and economic development systems through improved service integration.
- Provide businesses with skilled, productive and competitive talent and Floridians with employment, education, training and support services that reduce welfare dependence and increase opportunities for self-sufficiency, high-skill and high-wage careers and lifelong learning.
- Promote accountable, transparent and data-driven workforce investment through performance measures, monitoring and evaluation that inform strategies, drive operational excellence, lead to the identification and replication of best practices and empower an effective and efficient workforce delivery system.

- Improve career exploration, educational attainment and skills training for in-demand industries and occupations for Florida youth and individuals with barriers to employment that lead to enhanced employment, career development, credentialing, and postsecondary education opportunities.

Complementary to these broad goals, the REACH Act includes a number of strategies and initiatives that strengthen state and local level partnerships among workforce entities, increase accountability for the workforce system, and improve access to and alignment of workforce programs.

(3) Performance Goals

Core WIOA program partners continue to refine the process for collecting data and reporting performance. Core programs will assist state and LWDBs to negotiate levels of performance based on the statistical adjustment model. This model takes into consideration state and local economic factors including unemployment rates, industry sectors and characteristics of participants entering the program (e.g., work history, work experience, educational/occupational skills attainment, literacy levels, disability status, etc.). The core measures include:

- Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during second quarter after exit
- Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during fourth quarter after exit
- Median earnings of participants during second quarter after exit
- Percentage of participants who obtain a postsecondary credential or secondary school diploma within one year after exit
- Achievement of measurable skill gains toward credential or employment
- Effectiveness in serving employers

Negotiated levels of performance are reviewed and approved by the core program senior leadership, the state workforce investment board and ultimately the Governor. Data are housed in the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) system for quarterly and annual reporting by WIOA core program partners. Tables with updated performance and negotiated performance goals are in section III of this plan.

With the implementation of the REACH Act, work has begun to identify broad, cross-agency performance goals which can further align the initiatives of Florida's workforce partners. Additionally, the REACH Act calls for the development of criteria to assign a letter grade for each local workforce development board (LWDB) to provide a transparent assessment of LWDB performance.

(4) Assessment

Florida will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in relation to the strategic vision and goals through a variety of approaches. The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, including representation of all WIOA core partners and other key stakeholders, meets regularly throughout the year with an agenda tied to the vision and the goals. These meetings include updates for key strategic initiatives and projects, presentation of best practices that demonstrate progress in meeting goals, updates from core partners and other stakeholders, performance reports, and identification of board-led initiatives to further improve performance. Core partners provide performance data to the state workforce investment board. Performance is assessed in relation to state and local targets. Elements of the REACH Act are addressed during these regularly scheduled partner meetings.

Gaps in performance are addressed at the state and local levels. State-level teams provide technical assistance to local boards on complex performance issues. Core program partners share performance reports and special analyses of performance are conducted and shared across programs.

Assessment of overall effectiveness is considered by the state workforce investment board in preparing for annual planning and the state unified plan. Regular interagency meetings of the WIOA core partner programs address aspects of plan implementation and successful strategies for continuous improvement. These meetings include leadership and subject matter experts from the Florida Department of Education's Divisions of Career, Technical and Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services; the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; and CareerSource Florida. Additional partners have also been invited to attend including the Department of Children and Families, Senior Community Service Employment Program, and Community Service Block Grant.

A stakeholders' workgroup including core and other partners meets regularly to share information and provide input for the unified plan. The state is currently assessing the possibility of moving to a combined plan as the REACH Act calls for strong collaboration with the Department of Children and Families which administer the SNAP and TANF programs.

(e) State Strategy

(1) Implementation of State Strategies

The Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act was signed into law and went into effect July 1, 2021. The REACH Act creates several strategic opportunities to enhance and expand services provided through Florida's workforce development system by promoting, encouraging and taking bold steps toward **strengthening the partnerships** among workforce partners at the state and local levels. The Act also **strengthens oversight, accountability, and transparency** measures for the system. The implementation of the REACH Act in Florida will help the state fully realize the vision of WIOA and **improve the alignment** of the workforce system to the needs of employers and increase **access to the workforce system** to drive positive employment and training outcomes for customers.

The strategies described in this section align the WIOA core programs and required one-stop partner programs to fully integrate customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals of WIOA and the REACH Act. These strategies and initiatives strengthen workforce development activities and address weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2).

Delivering a Total Talent Delivery System to Florida's Targeted Industry Sectors
The myriad of business support and services made available throughout the CareerSource Florida network better positions Florida to respond to immediate and long-term talent needs of Florida's targeted Industry Sectors. Florida aims to deliver a seamless, externally focused Total Talent Delivery System for Florida's Targeted Industry Sectors. Using state, local and partner resources, the CareerSource Florida network helps to ensure that proactive talent supply and training strategies are implemented for Florida's Targeted Industry Sectors. Examples of such services include recruitment, hiring, training and the development of career pathways including the use of registered apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities to satisfy the current and future talent needs of Florida's Targeted Industry Sectors.

Skilled talent is often the primary driver of whether companies decide to move to and/or expand in Florida. Florida's talent pipeline is consistently ranked among the best in the nation. The 2022 Site Selection Regional Workforce Development Rankings list Florida as 3rd among the 8 states in the South Atlantic Region, improving from 4th in 2021. Florida is home to the nation's 3rd largest workforce, totaling more than 10 million workers. Much credit for the excellent skills of the Florida workforce can be credited to the collaboration between Florida's workforce system, business & industry and Florida's education partners often developing just in time workforce training programs. The CareerSource Florida network and the business community work closely with state's 12 public universities, 6 major medical schools, numerous private colleges and universities, as well as its K-12 public school systems to build and implement training solutions that respond to the needs of Florida's targeted industries.

New Business Services Dashboard

Since 2015, CareerSource Florida has shown the value of its business services network through the development of a monthly dashboard to illustrate and track business services. For example, From July 1 – August 30th, 2019, the dashboard shows the Quick Response Training Grant projected 1,877 trainees in industries such as Advanced Manufacturing, Corporate Headquarters and Software Publishers. Additionally, 97, 355 high-level business services, such as customized training, were provided to businesses during the same time period. It's imperative to measure the impact of high-quality services provided to Florida's businesses. To improve upon this effective strategy of measurement and analysis, Florida is recreating its Business Services Dashboard using innovative tools such as Salesforce's Customer Relationship Management platform and Microsoft BI. These new tools will enhance the current dashboard by providing greater real time information to state leaders, board of directors, local boards and partners on important data elements, such as number of businesses served, number of high-value services provided to businesses and number of projected trainees through state-level training grants by industry sectors and local workforce development board areas. Having access to real time data will better influence effective policy and strategy direction at both the state and local levels.

Business Services Alignment

To ensure greater effectiveness in meeting Florida's business and industry talent needs, CareerSource Florida's Business and Workforce Development Unit has aligned its team members to Enterprise Florida's (the state's lead economic development organization) major Industries of focus. Supported by the growth of a robust economy, thriving infrastructure and top-ranked labor force, these nine key business industries in Florida include: Aviation & Aerospace; Cleantech; Defense and Homeland Security; Financial and Professional Services; Headquarters; Information Technology; Life Sciences; Logistics and Distribution and Manufacturing. This structure continues to help the CareerSource Florida network deepen its knowledge of specific industries and better align efforts with state and local economic development and other partners focused on key industry sectors with opportunities for high-wage jobs and economic diversification.

Florida has continued this sector strategy approach by implementing Career Pathways developed within these sectors enabling individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and advance over time to successively higher levels of education or employment in that sector. It is important for education, training and support services to be connected regionally to help individuals of all skill levels and abilities to grow in a career while also businesses within key industries have access to qualified workers and a qualified talent pipeline.

Strengthening Sector Partnerships and Career Pathways
WIOA requires sector partnerships as a strategy under federal statute. The law defines both state-level and local-level responsibilities. FL Statutes 445.004(10) requires state workforce development strategy to include efforts that enlist business, education and community support for students to achieve long-term career goals. CareerSource Florida and its network collaborate with education partners to help ensure young people have the academic and occupational skills required to succeed in the workplace.

The state workforce development strategy assists employers in upgrading or updating the skills of their employees and helps workers acquire the education or training needed to secure a better job with better wages. This strategy assists the state's efforts to attract and expand job-creating businesses offering high-paying, high-demand occupations. Development of sector strategies and career pathways is a component of Florida's WIOA Unified Plan and state workforce development strategy. Sector strategies are regional, industry-focused approaches to building a skilled workforce and are an effective way to align public and private resources to address the talent needs of employers.

Evidence from states employing this approach shows that sector strategies can simultaneously improve employment opportunities for job seekers and enhance the competitiveness of industries. Mathematica Policy Research Brief indicates because sector strategies are developed in response to the human resource needs of regional businesses from a certain sector, the activities implemented as part of specific sector initiatives vary. Most sector strategies, however, focus on providing the under-skilled workforce with sector-focused occupational skills training that is designed and implemented with regional businesses' input and support. This helps to ensure that training graduates are equipped with the skills required to be productive employees at these businesses on their very first day of employment. Research suggests that the most effective of these trainings incorporate: (1) careful screening of potential participants; (2) comprehensive curricula covering general job readiness preparation, basic skills training, and more technical industry- and employer-driven skill development; and (3) support services for participants to help them complete the program. Effective sector strategies rely on strong sector partnerships, sometimes referred to as industry partnerships, workforce collaboratives or regional skills alliances. These partnerships are led by businesses within a critical industry cluster collaborating with workforce development, education and training, economic development, labor and community-based organizations.

Effective sector strategies are based on the following strategic framework:

- Built Around Great Data
- Founded on a Shared, Regional Vision
- Guided by Industry
- Lead to Strategic Alignment
- Transform How Services (job seekers/worker and employer) are Delivered
- Measured, Improved and Sustained

Building on the history of the unanimously passed Sector Strategy Strategic Policy by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, CareerSource Florida developed and implemented a Sector Strategies Toolkit to assist LWDBs with a range of activities, like the development of industry-driven workforce goals, action plans and policies and the enhancement of business and job seeker services. The Sector Strategy policy can be viewed online. More information about CareerSource Florida's approach to sector strategies and the Sector Strategy Toolkit can be viewed online.

CareerSource Florida continues to focus on sector strategies and sector partnerships as a proven method of reinforcing talent pipelines to support regional economies. Local workforce development boards continue to implement a mixture of effective sector strategy efforts to include industry sector rounds, regional forums, and other industry led strategies to better inform both workforce and education about industry's existing and future talent needs. These efforts often lead to industry-based solutions meeting the needs of multiple businesses within a sector, verses a single solution for an individual employer such as the FloridaMakes IMT Program, CareerSource Brevard Aerospace Consortium, CareerSource Brevard Healthcare Consortium and access to CareerSource network services needed by the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association for recruitment needs across all businesses in this sector due to COVID-19.

Career Pathways enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and advance over time to successively higher levels of education or employment in that sector. It is important for education, training and support services to be connected regionally to help individuals of all skill levels and abilities to grow in a career. Career pathways also help businesses within key industries have access to qualified workers and a qualified talent pipeline.

Career Pathways is an important focus of Florida's REACH Act requiring Florida's workforce agencies to collaborate with business and industry leaders to create a state-approved list of credentials to align training with workforce demands. Job tracks in high-demand fields will be supported by a new Open Door Workforce Grant Program, which received a $35 million appropriation.

To further support the development of career pathways, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors announced the approval of more than $29 million in investments in PY 2021/22 for training, education and systems alignment to help Floridians embark on career pathways to self-sufficiency and economic prosperity.

With the continued focus and expansion of career pathways, especially in key target sectors identified in each local workforce development board's two-year plan, Florida's workers will have the skills needed to obtain good jobs and employers will have the workers they need to remain competitive and to prosper. Sector and pathway strategies in Florida's targeted sectors include the following:

Advanced Manufacturing

Florida's manufacturing industry accounts for more than $55 billion in output to the state's economy. Florida is home to more than 20,000 manufacturing companies. Florida is also one of the nation's leaders in medical manufacturing. Ranking at No. 3 in total medical technology employment, with nearly 24,000 Florida jobs. The state is No. 7 in total revenue generated in the sector with $6.09 billion.

In August 2021, manufacturing had 382,300 jobs in Florida, an increase of 9,600 jobs over the year. All 24 local workforce development boards in Florida identified manufacturing as a targeted industry sector in their two-year plan.

Strategies to strengthen Sector Partnerships and Career Pathways in Manufacturing include partnerships and continuous collaboration with FloridaMakes, the state's Manufacturing Extension Partnership. Members of the CareerSource Florida professional team serve on the board of directors and Apprenticeship Committee for Florida Makes as well as participating in the Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Leadership Council (AMWLC) meetings.

Several local workforce development boards have created and/or partnered with other entities to develop and/or expand manufacturing registered apprenticeships in their local areas including CareerSource Research Coast's Industrial Manufacturing Technician in partnership with Indian River State College, Valencia College and Paradigm Precision, as well as, CareerSource South Florida's Precision Machinists Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Program, GNJ with Machining Solutions, LLC. Continued expansion for this sector is warranted as manufacturing jobs lead to self-sufficient wages and afford excellent pathway opportunities. Additional partnerships have been created with local economic development organizations like JAX USA and CareerSource Northeast Florida to develop clear pathways in targeted sectors through their Earn-Up Initiative. Here's a great example of their Advanced Manufacturing Pathway can be viewed at https://earnup.org/.

Trade & Logistics

Florida's Trade & Logistics sector boasts over 57,000 establishments and growing with over 604,00 employees. As witnessed by the impact of COVID, the Trade & Logistics Industry in Florida has seen a tremendous increase in both growth and talent development needs.

Over the next five years, Florida will invest about $3.3 billion in capital improvements to its seaports. About 26% of those funds will be allocated to berth rehabilitation and repairs, about 20% each to cruise and cargo terminals, and 9% to channel and harbor deepening. Companies like Amazon, Chewy, Fed Ex Ground, AutoZone, Publix are all experiencing substantial growth in Florida leading to the need for greater sector partnerships and career pathway development. August 2021 saw a 79% increase in online job ads with over 13,000 openings as compared to August 2020. Companies like Coke Florida, Anheuser-Busch, Publix and the Association of Supply Chaim Management are working with the CareerSource Florida network and partners to implement strategies and solutions to meet their growing workforce talent needs.

As many of these larger employers have a footprint across multiple regions in Florida, CareerSource Florida facilitates calls with these employers and multiple workforce boards to bring together a single point of contact with the goal of developing a Total Talent Solution. To respond to this growing demand Florida's regional development boards also work closely with business and education to sponsor or engage in the development of registered apprenticeship programs in this important sector. CareerSource Research Coast sponsored a Distribution and Logistics Technician in partnership with CVS, Indian River State College and Valencia College. CareerSource South Florida partnered with the District Board of Trustees of Miami Dade College to develop a Miami Dade College Apprenticeship Program – GNJ, Transportation & Logistics Specialists serving the talent needs of multiple south Florida companies.

Additional partnerships have been created with local economic development organizations like JAX USA and CareerSource Northeast Florida to develop clear career pathways in targeted sectors through their Earn-Up Initiative. An exemplary example of their Trade & Logistics Pathway can be viewed online at https://earnup.org/.

Healthcare and Life Sciences Sector Strategies

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the healthcare industry in the state of Florida and in particular the healthcare workforce, making an existing shortage of healthcare workers even greater. Stress and burnout from overworked healthcare frontline workers, along with early retirements or exits from the healthcare workforce for a myriad of other reasons has made the situation even more dire. Many nurses left the bedside for less stressful healthcare roles or left hospitals in Florida to travel to other

COVID hotspots in other states to make more money. Florida hospitals have resorted to hiring expensive traveling nurses to cover nursing shortages. As of September 2021, 79% of nursing job postings are currently filled with agency nursing staff, which can limit consistent mentoring and team building, as well as result in much higher costs to the hospital.

As Florida's population continues to grow due to migration and as the population in the state continues to age, with Florida currently having the highest percentage of senior citizens in the country, the need for creating innovative healthcare workforce development strategies is greater now than at any time in the past.

According to the Florida Hospital Association's 2017 Economic Impact Report, Florida hospitals generated 901,674 jobs with $51.2 billion in labor income. According to the Florida Health Care Association, the state's advocate for long term care providers and the elders they serve, the long-term care industry contributes to 286,149 jobs and supports $10.43 billion in labor income through employment of both direct caregivers and support staff.

All the state's 24 local workforce development boards have identified healthcare as a targeted industry sector in their strategic plans. Sector Partnerships and Career Pathways in healthcare have included the development of healthcare workforce consortiums of healthcare employers, educators, workforce boards, and other community partners in some regions and regular healthcare workforce roundtable discussions in other regions. CareerSource Florida also partners with state-wide healthcare organizations and associations such as the Florida Hospital Association, the Florida Senior Living Association, Florida Health Care Association, and the newly created Nursing Action Coalition of Florida, among others.

Although strides are being made toward developing strategies to assist the healthcare industry in the state with workforce development initiatives, many healthcare employers find themselves at a disadvantage due to the overwhelming need to satisfy immediate nursing needs due to the ongoing pandemic. Hospitals especially find planning for long-term workforce development and training a luxury they just cannot afford at this time and instead must focus on short-term and often expensive recruitment efforts.

Despite healthcare leaders being overwhelmed due to the ongoing pandemic, many healthcare leaders are making time to investigate opportunities for long-term healthcare workforce development. CareerSource Brevard County has created a Healthcare Workforce Consortium for their region, which convenes healthcare industry employers, education and workforce development partners and community and faith-based stakeholders. This consortium is an employer driven partnership to identify healthcare workforce needs that meets regularly throughout the year to implement strategies to strengthen the healthcare talent pipeline.

Expanding this healthcare workforce consortium to other regions and potentially creating a state-wide consortium, with healthcare employers and stakeholders coming together to share ideas and resources and working cooperatively to develop a strong plan of action to solve the healthcare workforce needs of the state, will be a priority. This "Healthcare Sector Partnership" would be driven by great data, founded on a shared state-wide vision and regional vision, led by industry, will lead to strategic alignment, will transform how services (both employer and job seeker) are delivered, and will be measured, improved, and sustained.

Registered apprenticeship is a vital part of the state's healthcare workforce strategy as it is a great way to train both new and existing healthcare workers while also addressing some of the workforce issues like recruitment and retention. Registered apprenticeship is showing great promise in helping to develop

talent for the healthcare industry and currently there are Florida registered apprenticeship programs in occupations like Registered Nursing, Home Health Aide, Pharmacy Technician, Telehealth Navigator, Community Health Worker, and others that are in the works. The many benefits of using a registered apprenticeship model for workforce development include providing an immediate job for the apprentice, along with related technical instruction, mentorship, and on the job training. Employers benefit by having an employee who is constantly learning and growing in their roles and will finish their apprenticeship with a nationally recognized industry certification, as well as any state required certifications.

CareerSource Florida connects healthcare and life sciences employers to LWDBs across the state, helping them to create strategies for recruitment, training and retention in their own regions. CareerSource Florida also plays a major role in the development and expansion of registered apprenticeship programs in healthcare by both providing healthcare employers with apprenticeship information and training and by connecting them to existing healthcare apprenticeship sponsors, education providers, local workforce boards and the Department of Education's Office of Apprenticeship.

Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association

According to the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA), Florida's premier non-profit hospitality industry trade association, COVID-19 is the worst economic event in the history of the U.S. hotel industry and despite hotels being among the hardest hit, they are only a segment of the hospitality and leisure industry. While leisure travel in the state has rebounded for the most part, business travel remains down overall in the state and Florida's travel and tourism industry is projected to end 2021 with the second highest losses in the nation.

The National Restaurant Association has found that although restaurant and foodservice industry sales are up 19.7% the first half of 2021 over sales in 2019, that 75% of restaurant operators reported that recruiting employees was their top challenge in 2021. Restaurants across the state are limiting their hours of operation and fast-food chains are closing their dine in space due to a lack of workers to cover all of the shifts.

Hospitality workers who lost their jobs in early 2020 due to COVID-19 closures had found other jobs or remained at home due to health concerns or because they now need to provide childcare for young children.

In May 2021, the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association reached out to CareerSource Florida for assistance with strategies to recruit talent across the state into hospitality and food service roles. Working with the membership organization, CareerSource Florida put together a comprehensive plan to assist the industry.

Current Wage Data – The most recent wage data (2019) was provided to the FRLA for numerous hospitality related roles, including waiters and waitresses, food prep workers, chefs, maids and housekeeping, desk clerks, amusement attendants, and other related occupations. In consultation with FRLA association staff, we encouraged them to consider increasing wages and offering sign-on bonuses as ways to attract new workers.

Connected to Local Workforce Development Boards – FRLA was provided with hospitality sector contacts at each of the 24-local boards, individuals who specialize in the hospitality industry and could deploy regional strategies based on the industry's needs.

CareerSource Florida Resource Webinar – CareerSource Florida hosted a statewide webinar for FRLA members that provided an overview of business services, including recruitment, hiring, training and other services to assist members of the hospitality industry.

High School and Trade School Culinary Programs – CareerSource Florida provided FRLA with a list of Florida high schools and trade schools that have culinary programs and those that offer the Serve Safe Certification so they could easily identify and contact these schools for trained workers.

Registered Apprenticeship – The benefits of creating registered apprenticeships as a long-term talent development solution for hospitality careers, specifically designed to offer career pathways to entry level roles was discussed and resource about starting and operating a registered apprenticeship program were also shared with the FRLA.

CareerSource Florida continues to contact the FRLA to share resources and information as it relates to the industry and local boards have hosted and continue to host hiring events and job fairs for members. Additionally, local boards have enacted specific strategies to attract individuals with disabilities, youth, and others with barriers to employment into the hospitality industry. Some of Florida's LWDBs actively participated on Hospitality Task Forces to help restaurants, hotels, and other establishments to leverage available SBA funding and obtain access to other helpful resources to maintain successful operations.

Aviation/Aerospace

The resurgence of the Aerospace Industry in Florida, particularly with the Space Coast being a major launch and vehicle assembly hub, means that workforce development is integral to the success of the Aviation and Aerospace industry. Florida is in a unique position to support this industry as Florida has long been the world's premier gateway to space.

Florida's aviation and defense has $8.2 billion in exports, with nearly 106,000+ Floridian's working in Florida's aviation and aerospace industries. Veterans play a large role in the success of this industry with Florida being home to nearly 60,000 active-duty personnel, 30,000 civilian personnel, more than 11,000 annual military separatees, and 1.44 million veterans.

CareerSource Florida uses sector strategies as a proven method of strengthening talent pipelines to support regional economies and has a long history of convening industry and education partners. These strategic partnerships offer frequent opportunities to share relevant data and develop targeted initiatives resulting in successful traditional and online training, apprenticeships, and innovative work-based learning strategies for career pathways.

Space Florida, the aerospace economic development agency of the state of Florida; the Economic Development Commission Florida's Space Coast, the economic development agency for Brevard County, the birthplace of American space exploration and the hub of Florida's space industry; and industry partners including SpaceX, Lockheed Martin, Embraer, Northrup Grumman, L3Harris make up the Aerospace Consortium and have a long history of shaping sector based education, training and credentialing programs.

Florida's Aero-Flex Pre-Apprenticeship program was specifically developed for the Aerospace/Aviation industry to build industry-led training and credentialing for career advancement and a competitive edge for participating employers. Offered online from six to 12–weeks, the customizable model is in the early phases of statewide replication as a best practice. Strategic partners include FloridaMakes, Florida Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Leadership Council (AMWLC), CareerSource Florida, the Florida Department of Education's Division of Career and Adult Education, Tooling U–SME, Career Readiness Courseware and Credentials and CareerSource Brevard. Employers collaborating in this program include Northrop Grumman, SpaceX among many others.

Information Technology
The REACH Act places emphasis on priority populations and IT certifications. As the nation's third-largest tech industry, more than 34,000 high tech companies are in Florida and employ more than 272,000 Floridians. Florida ranks Number 4 for high tech employment in the US. Throughout Florida, multiple technology associations are focused on increasing employment in this industry. Local workforce development boards have increased exposure into IT related activities.

CareerSource South Florida in collaboration with The Carrie Meek Foundation, New Horizons Learning Centers and YMCA of south Florida launched a Women in IT 16-week Boot Camp which will prepare women for industry recognized IT credentials such as CompTIA A+, Network + among others. CareerSource Research Coast sponsored three registered apprenticeship programs in information technology.

This work-based training opportunity helps local employers build a larger, skilled and diverse talent pipeline in technology. CareerSource Florida's collaboration with LWDBs, partners and other employer led groups will be important in upskilling the talent needs in the technology industry. Based on these numbers, we will continue to increase credentials in this industry by targeting opportunity populations through activities such as apprenticeships and other work-based training opportunities.

Fintech & Corporate Headquarters
Another major industry sector of focus in Florida is financial services, financial technology (or fintech), Insurance and corporate headquarters. Florida is home to the third-largest cluster of insurance and banking companies in the United States. As of 2018, there were nearly 139,000 business establishments in the state in this sector employing nearly 953,000 employees with an average wage of $88,447. There are over 27,000 Florida residents with a Series 7 Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) licenses, nearly 35,000 Floridians with a Series 63 FINRA license, and another 21,700 residents have obtained Series 65 and 66 FINRA licenses. As of the same date, there were nearly 3,700 corporate headquarters in the state employing over 102,500 employees with an average annual wage of $108,486.

Recognizable institutions in the Fin Tech industry that call Florida home include Depository Trust and Clearing Corporation, USAA, Citigroup, Navy Federal Credit Union, Blackstone, Deutsche Bank, Fidelity, Raymond James, among others. Many of these firms have established large operations in Florida to take advantage of the state's global connectivity, especially to Latin America. Degree production of this sector included 39,582 awards ranging from certificates, bachelors, and postgraduate degrees.

To further develop the talent pipeline for this sector, Governor Ron DeSantis awarded more than $3.6 M through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund to the Florida State College at Jacksonville and St. Johns River State College in February 2020 to create the Northeast Florida Fintech Initiative. This initiative represents a partnership between both colleges, regional schools, nonprofits and numerous financial services companies to provide new financial technology training and certification opportunities.

Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities
Registered apprenticeships are a proven solution to help businesses grow a custom trained workforce stacked with well qualified, highly skilled workers who are recruited, trained, and retained by an employer for their specific needs. Apprenticeships are designed by and for the employer with a specialized focus on the unique needs for a specific job. Apprentices learn in the workplace and develop the customized skills and knowledge they need to become fully competent employees.

In 2018, CareerSource Florida polled 100 business leaders and 100 perspective apprentices and learned that awareness of registered apprenticeships was a major issue. Most of those polled admitted to having little to no knowledge about what a registered apprenticeship entailed. Once the polled employers learned more about how a registered apprenticeship could benefit their workforce development needs, they indicated that they would strongly consider using an apprenticeship strategy.

Apprentice Florida

The Apprentice Florida website, a partnership with the Department of Education's Division of Career and Adult Education, was launched to raise awareness about apprenticeships and the benefits and to offer businesses and individuals an opportunity to learn more or be contacted by a CareerSource Florida network apprenticeship specialist. The goal is that 7% of persons with disabilities engage in the workforce through apprenticeships.

The Apprentice Florida website provides a series of apprenticeship video tutorials and testimonials to explain the benefits of registered apprenticeships as customized, replicable training to address workforce occupational needs.

Employers and others interested in becoming a registered apprenticeship sponsor can also find a Business Toolkit on the Apprentice Florida Resources page. This is a step-by-step guide provides an easy-to-follow checklist for establishing and managing an apprenticeship program, from locating key partners to setting up training, developing training, establishing a wage structure with wage increases at major benchmarks, and credential attainment.

The Apprentice Florida website also has in-depth guides for employers, job seekers, education partners and LWDBs to participate.

Visitors to the Apprentice Florida website can fill out a form to be contacted by the CareerSource Florida network to learn more about registered apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship Navigator Initiative

To build capacity and improve awareness, apprenticeship navigators are located at all 24 local boards. The apprenticeship navigator training program provides a repository of accessible tools and resources within a virtual team platform that provides a forum for ongoing support. Additionally, navigators meet monthly to discuss expansion initiatives, identify process delivery improvements, and review outreach/communications mechanisms.

As subject matter experts, apprenticeship navigators at LWDBs work with internal partners to identify the needs of businesses and job seekers. They also work with external partners to leverage resources that increase apprenticeship opportunities. The navigators educate themselves and their partners of local, state, and national apprenticeship funding opportunities such as grants, incentive programs, and philanthropic awards and work closely in partnership with the Florida Department of Education Office of Apprenticeship's apprenticeship training representatives to expand apprenticeship opportunities statewide.

Apprenticeship Standards Builder
CareerSource Florida, in partnership with the Florida Department of Education, Division of Career and Adult Education will be developing a Registered Apprenticeship Standard Builder tool in order develop an online application for use by employers, educators, CareerSource Florida network Apprenticeship Navigators, and LWDBs, to easily navigate registered apprenticeship forms, develop standards for each occupation, and prepare documentation for Florida's Department of Education's Apprentice Training Representative's to review. This online tool will assist employers and other registered apprenticeship sponsors to easily assemble work processes and related technical instruction standards for their apprenticeship programs and to design customized career pathways for their apprentices.

This tool will assist a prospective employer, educator, industry association, or local workforce development board to choose an apprenticeable occupation that they want to register, incorporate on-the-job training functions, related technical instruction with the ability to auto fill, delete and add functions, choose the training method, including a link to local education provider contacts, allow for various forms of registered apprenticeship models, and follow the Standards of Apprenticeship document. The tool will also incorporate an Apprenticeship Return on Investment calculator that includes wage increment savings and WIOA based funding sources that can be used to offset costs.

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors committed $500,000 in 2020 to support the development of this Registered Apprenticeship Standards Builder tool.

Examples of LWDB Participation in Apprenticeship Expansion
Local workforce development boards and apprenticeship navigators participate in apprenticeship expansion in multiple ways. Career development professionals and local workforce boards can work together to help existing apprenticeship employers recruit potential apprentices through job postings, recruitment events, and by providing work-ready assessments, referrals, and support to WIOA eligible apprentices.

CareerSource Capital Region – Apprentice Recruitment
CS Capital Region staff attended Lively Technical College Open House in February 2020 for registered apprenticeship student recruitment to make them aware of apprenticeship opportunities with Inspired Technologies, Inc. Thirty-four career seekers were recruited although only eight, subsequently, took the Ready-to-Work (R-T-W) Assessment. Two career seekers met the eligibility criteria for Inspired Technologies, Inc. as well as met WIOA eligibility criteria. Those two were referred to Inspired Technologies, Inc. where they were hired as Help Desk Technician apprentices.

In response to the help received by CareerSource Capital Region and Inspired Technologies, Inc., the career seeker wrote in a testimonial: "I can wholeheartedly say that from the beginning to the end of things that they have offered me an amazing life-changing experience."

Business service representatives and apprenticeship navigators can work with employers that are interested in participating in existing programs by connecting them with existing programs that provide the occupational training they need.

CareerSource Central Florida – Multiple Employers
In partnership with the iBuild Central Florida Apprenticeship Program, CS Central Florida assisted in forming a partnership of multiple construction employers in need of carpenters to develop a new apprenticeship occupation program in carpentry to train carpenter apprentices. The developed is referred to as iCAP (iBuild Carpentry Apprenticeship Program) and is a four-year program that provides training on the jobsite and classroom instruction. The curriculum used by the 30 apprentices enrolled in the program is the National Center for Construction Education (NCCER). Upon completion, apprentices receive their journeyman card.

Potential sponsors can work with local workforce boards to help them discern whether apprenticeship training is right for them and refer them to FI DOE apprenticeship training representatives to register a new occupational apprenticeship program.

CareerSource Research Coast – Apprentice Sponsor
Piper Aircraft, Inc., based in Vero Beach Florida, will begin its third cohort of registered apprentices in August 2021. The apprenticeship program utilizes a hybrid model, in which Piper determines the training timeframe for the apprentices, allowing apprentices who master the required competencies to advance more rapidly. The registered apprenticeship program is a partnership between the Piper Aircraft company, Indian River State College and CareerSource Research Coast, which provided federal WIOA funding and support services for apprentices who qualified. The program, which is 24 months long, will graduate dozens of apprentices with a nationally recognized certificate as Certified Production Technicians.

Local Workforce Development Board Sponsored Register Apprenticeship Programs
CS North Florida and CS Flagler Volusia sponsor a registered apprenticeship program to train Career Development Technicians as staff members. Since 2018, CS Suncoast has sponsored a registered Tool and Die Maker apprenticeship program with additional programs underway. Since 2019, CS Research Coast sponsors programs in four different occupations including Distribution and Logistics, Industrial Manufacturing, Marine Services, and Truss Design Technicians. In addition, working under a contract with the U.S. Department of Labor to expand the use of registered apprenticeships for tech occupations nationwide, CompTIA and Maher & Maher have partnered with CareerSource Research Coast to launch three newly registered occupational programs to train apprentices as network support specialists, cybersecurity support technicians, and tech support specialists.

Lockheed Martin Corporation
Lockheed Martin Corporation, a global security and aerospace company, which employs approximately 105,000 people worldwide and nearly 17,000 Floridians, is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. Lockheed Martin's leadership set a goal to create 8,000 apprentices' enterprise-wide over five years. In August 2019, CareerSource Florida and Lockheed Martin partnered on an unprecedented opportunity. Leveraging Quick Response Training grants and the statewide support of the CareerSource Florida network, the project is helping to meet Lockheed Martins' talent development needs by creating high-wage jobs and apprenticeships for Floridians.

Using a piloted approach, Lockheed Martin and CareerSource Florida have partnered to implement an expansion project creating registered apprenticeship programs to help meet the company's hiring needs of more than 2,500 new employees over five years. Since the launch of the partnership in 2019, Lockheed has created an LM Apprenticeship Navigator program resulting in more than 430 apprentices, 357 of which are connected to their pilot site in Ocala.

In partnership with the College of Central Florida, CareerSource Florida, Lockheed Martin, CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion and other partners, a state-of-the-art innovative apprenticeship lab was built at the college's Ocala campus to create the talent pipeline needed by the Ocala site. Through a staged process, Lockheed Martin is expanding the pilot into other key company locations, connecting with up to six additional LWDBs, their educational partners and other key stakeholders. The CareerSource Florida network and its partners will continue to provide support and continued assistance building those apprenticeship programs, recruiting potential talent, and identifying grant opportunities to defray training costs, all resulting in delivering a total talent solution for Lockheed Martin.

Strategic Policies

CareerSource Florida advances strategic policies that connect employers with qualified, skilled talent and Floridians with employment and career development opportunities. These strategic policies are high-level principles or directional statements that inform or clarify federal and state legislative policy or workforce system strategies. Strategic policies direct decision-making at the program level and may result in the development of administrative policies.

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion:

For many years, Florida was the number one job creation state in the nation. Since 2015, the state created more than one out of 11 jobs nationwide. However, due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Florida lost jobs in every sector, with the leisure and hospitality sector taking the biggest hit. That was of great concern since we rely heavily on visitor sales tax revenue to bolster the state coffers.

Although Florida has enjoyed a successful IWT grant program at the state level for 21 years, with great return on investment, due to demand, those funds are quickly depleted in less than one year. The program focuses on the small business training needs and use of the program to keep their workers and their companies competitive and their doors open. It is vital that CareerSource Florida does everything possible to support small businesses who historically have created more jobs than large companies. In fact, in Florida, according to the Florida Chamber of Commerce, small business creates 60% of new jobs. Yet small businesses fall under the USDOL Rapid Response Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) threshold requirements and may go undetected because they affect fewer than 50 employees. A strong rapid response/layoff aversion program will assist businesses of all sizes in the state.

IWT is a shining example of a layoff aversion tool. In place since 1999, the program is designed to meet the needs of an employer to retain a skilled workforce or AVERT layoffs. IWT can help employees obtain the skills necessary to retain employment, or to gain promotions within the company and create backfill opportunities for less-skilled employees.

In December 2020, CareerSource Florida realized that there was an opportunity to make the state resilient with a focus on modernizing a 17-year-old rapid response policy that was effective with no changes since enacted. A policy workgroup including CareerSource Florida, the Department of Economic Opportunity, LWDBs and economic development stakeholders was formed and reviewed best practices in other states (North Carolina, Oregon, Maryland, among others). The policy working group had two goals: first, to modernize the outdated rapid response policy and two, to determine what could be done at the state-level to develop proactive early warning systems, as layoff aversion is the purpose of rapid response.

According to the Code of Federal Regulation 682.300(b), the purpose of rapid response is to promote economic recovery and vitality by developing an ongoing, comprehensive approach to identifying, planning for, responding to layoffs and dislocations, and preventing or minimizing their impacts on workers, businesses, and communities.

The working group met a total of seven times leading to the creation of a strategic policy unanimously approved by the CareerSource Florida board of directors in June 2021. The strategic policy requires LWDBs to implement comprehensive, proactive rapid response systems with an emphasis on layoff aversion activities as described in USDOL Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 19-16.

A best practice in layoff aversion is led by CareerSource South Florida which announced its **COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund**, which is designed to provide support to small businesses or community-based organizations (CBOs) within Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, facing financial impacts and potential layoffs from the coronavirus. The fund provides grants to small businesses or CBOs experiencing economic distress. The goals of the fund were to prevent potential layoffs or minimize the duration of unemployment resulting from layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Incumbent Worker Training Policy:
The Incumbent Worker Training Program policy ensures the training grant program is administered directly by Career Source Florida. By aligning IWT and QRT programs under the administration of CareerSource Florida, coordination of these programs is accomplished, and the CareerSource Florida professional team is able to respond efficiently to the talent needs of Florida businesses. Improved administrative and fiscal efficiency are realized having both programs administered by CareerSource Florida.

The Florida Legislature created the IWT program to implement the state's Workforce Investment Act. IWT provides grant funding for training of existing (incumbent) employees of a Florida business. Florida law originally required a private-sector entity to administer the state-level grant program. While private sector grant administrators performed contracted duties satisfactorily, this law was changed to allow CareerSource Florida to administer the IWT program. This allowed for unified coordination of the IWT and QRT programs by eliminating unnecessary administration impeding the process.

When workers lack needed training and businesses experience skill gaps, the company's ability to compete, expand and retain workers can be compromised. Florida's Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Program, funded by the federal WIOA, and administered by CareerSource Florida addresses such needs. The IWT Program was created for the purpose of providing grant funding for continuing education and training of incumbent employees at existing Florida businesses. The program will provide reimbursement grants to businesses that pay for preapproved, direct, training related costs. Currently, companies may receive a reimbursement rate up to 50 percent or 75 percent.

The REACH Act established new priority considerations for IWT grants which were implemented in 2021.

Sector Strategy Policy:
This policy lays out the State of Florida's strategic vision for effective sector strategies. Local workforce development boards are required to include their approach to establishing, implementing and sustaining effective sector strategies in their local workforce development plans. This policy lays out the State of Florida's strategic vision for effective sector strategies, as outlined in the following strategic framework:

- Driven by High-Quality Data
- Founded on a Shared, Regional Vision
- Directed by Industry
- Lead to Strategic Alignment
- Transform How Services (job seeker/worker and employer) are delivered
- Measured, Improved and Sustained

This policy applies to CareerSource Florida and all 24 local workforce development boards. It requires LWDBs to include their approach to establishing, implementing and sustaining effective sector strategies in their local workforce development plans.

Local Area Targeted Occupations List Process Policy:
A Targeted Occupations List (TOL) process promotes alignment, economic growth and efficiency among local boards within the CareerSource Florida network. This process creates flexibility in occupational targeting and incorporates immediate business and industry feedback to complement labor market information.

Impacting all 24 local boards, this policy promotes greater strategic business and industry involvement in resource allocation, targeting training funds for workers needing improved employment and earning opportunities, and efficiently serves employers in industry sectors lacking skilled workers. Each local board may add or delete occupations to its current TOL based on the demand of local employers. This process and revised Local Area Targeted Occupations Lists do not require approval by CareerSource Florida). This Local Area Targeted Occupations List Process policy seeks to:

Align with target industries or infrastructure industries' training needs as identified by the number of trainees per local area in targeted categories.

- Increase the number of individuals in training that leads to job placement.
- Provide opportunities to obtain credentials or degrees earned because of training.
- Make readily available and transparent access to information on training (including levels of training subsidies); and,
- Improve business and job seeker customer satisfaction – as measured through surveys.

Targeted Occupations Lists identify occupations targeted for growth that offer wages with incomes enabling economic self-sufficiency. Upon action by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, the TOL approval process was transferred to local boards for the identification and selection of occupations relevant to local areas. With occupations identified and listed for their area, local boards can direct training resources for occupations in demand to assist job seekers as well as local area workers seeking better employment and higher-earning opportunities. This policy allows TOLs to be compiled by each local board for its local area. The improved TOL process enhances collaboration between each local board and its stakeholders, resulting in a skilled workforce responsive to industry talent needs.

This policy will be reconciled with new requirements in the REACH Act including the establishment of a process developed by the Credentials Review Committee whereby credentials and programs will be assessed based on local demand needs.

Enhancing Performance Measurement
The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors prioritizes transparency and accountability as Florida continues to enhance performance in serving businesses and job seekers, with a focus on targeted industries, training, and opportunity populations. In 2019, the state board authorized the development and implementation of the Continuous Improvement Performance Initiative, which can be accessed at https://performance.careersourceflorida.com/CIP.

The Continuous Improvement Performance Initiative was designed and developed based on input from local workforce development board leaders during strategy planning and feedback sessions. Team members from CareerSource Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity conducted best practice research, historical data analyses, and evaluation of past systems. A statewide Performance Advisory Council, comprised of local workforce development board representatives, was established to provide feedback and recommendations for continuous improvement. WIOA core leaders and the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors received frequent updates throughout the design and implementation phases.

The initiative includes three key metrics, with additional credit for serving individuals with barriers to employment and for providing staff-assisted, high-value services to business establishments in up to five board-selected industry sectors:

- Employment Rate 1st Quarter After Exit: The percentage of WIOA and Wagner-Peyser participants who exited the system and had certified wages the first quarter after exit.
- Participant Training Rate: The percentage of WIOA participants who received training services.
- Business Penetration: The number of business establishments provided a staff-assisted, high-value service by a local workforce development board.

While funding for the performance incentive awards was not included in the 2020-2021 state set-aside budget, the state board continues to support the initiative by maintaining a performance reporting website for the measures above, thus allowing local boards to continue to monitor their performance and support local strategies for service delivery.

Providing Quality Services to People with Disabilities
Recognizing the unique challenges Floridians with disabilities may face in finding a job, the CareerSource Florida network continues leading, investing, and participating in initiatives to connect people with disabilities to employers. The Abilities Work web portal at https://abilitieswork.employflorida.com/vosnet/Default.aspx helps link employers and job seekers with disabilities. The Abilities Work help desk is administered by Vocational Rehabilitation and is a resource to support the linkage between employers and qualified job seekers with disabilities. More discussion on this portal can be found in section II(a)(2)(A) of this plan.

Other key employment initiatives to assist Floridians with disabilities include:

Employment First Florida
Seven of Florida's state agencies and nonprofit organizations, including CareerSource Florida, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), the Department of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Education (Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, VR and FDBS), the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, RESPECT of Florida, and the Department of Children and Families (Mental Health and Substance Abuse) came together through an interagency cooperative agreement. This collaboration improves coordination of services that help people with disabilities obtain employment and achieve self-sufficiency.

- The Employment First collaborative developed a comprehensive and coordinated statewide communications plan to improve outreach, describing services available to support employment and training for people with disabilities. This initiative responds directly to a key recommendation of the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities.
- In the fall of 2019, a new 5-year Employment First Interagency Collaborative agreement was signed by 11 state agencies and organizations including:
- The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council which is committed to advocating and promoting programs, practices and innovative initiatives that enhance the independence, productivity, inclusion and self-determination of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of live.
- The Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, which works with local communities and private providers to support people who have developmental disabilities and their families in living, learning and working in their communities.
- The Arc of Florida which works with local, state and national partners and advocates for people with intellectual disabilities, autism, spina bifida, cerebral palsy (CP), Prader Willi syndrome and other developmental disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of their community.
- The Florida Division of Blind Services which helps individuals who are visually impaired achieve their goals and live their lives with as much independence and self-direction as possible.
- The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services whose mission is to provide students with special needs services and opportunities for personal and professional growth through collaboration of families, professionals and communities.
- CareerSource Florida, the statewide workforce policy and investment board that engages with local businesses to learn more about and hire people with disabilities.
- The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, which administers state and federal programs and initiatives to help visitors, citizens, businesses and communities achieve economic independence.
- The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, which works to insure the availability of efficient, cost-effective and quality transportation services for transportation disadvantaged persons.
- The Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office which is responsible for the oversight of a statewide system of care for the prevention, treatment, and recovery of children and adults with serious mental illnesses or substance abuse disorders.

- The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation which helps people with disabilities overcome barriers to accessing, maintaining or returning to employment, and
- The Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, a statewide, professional industry associate that provides advocacy, information, and networking for individuals with disabilities and the community agencies that service them.

More Information about Employment First can be obtained on the website for the Florida Development Disabilities Council at https://www.employmentfirstfl.org/.

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program
The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program recognizes businesses that are committed to providing career and financial opportunities to individuals with disabilities and to assisting organizations that support the disability community. Participating businesses demonstrate their dedication to strengthening communities and the economy by helping these Floridians with untapped talents become more independent and by partnering with other businesses, organizations and state resources in this endeavor.

Information about the Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program can be obtained on the Department of Economic Opportunity's website at https://floridajobs.org/unique-abilities-partner-program .

Family Café
The Family Café is an expo-style annual event held over several days each summer in Orlando that connects Floridians with disabilities and their families with information, training and networking opportunities. For several years, VR, FDBS and other WIOA partners have been involved in planning the Family Café and presenting useful information. CareerSource Florida is a primary sponsor of the Family Café and helps connect job seekers with disabilities and their families with employment resources and employers at the event each year. These efforts provide a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of employment and training resources available through the CareerSource Florida network and core partners.

The 24th Annual Family Café will be held May 27-29, 2022, in Orlando, Florida. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 event was held as a hybrid event that included both in-person and virtual breakout sessions. More information and the full program for the event can be found at: https://familycafe.net .

Ticket to Work
Fifteen Florida LWDBs are designated as Employment Networks by the Social Security Administration (SSA), enabling their participation in the federally funded Ticket to Work program. Through Ticket to Work, recipients of Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income receive priority assistance such as job search, career planning and skill building through participating CareerSource Florida network career centers. The program is free and voluntary for participants.

These services enhance efforts of job seekers to find and retain a job and to work toward self- sufficiency. Participating LWDBs receive funding from the Social Security Administration for workforce services provided to "ticketholders."

The Florida Division of Blind Services participates in the VR Cost Reimbursement Program, which allows the Division to file claims with SSA for repayment of direct costs and administrative fees. Reimbursements reflect costs associated with assisting SSA beneficiaries through gainful employment at earnings above Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level. A beneficiary's ticket assignment is one factor used to determine if FDBS can submit a claim for reimbursement. Using the assigned tickets from the Ticket to Work program, the FDBS has been able to increase returns in their cost reimbursement program (SFY19 – $1,116,799.35; SFY20 – $2,205,298.18; and SFY21 – $1,648,039.64).

SNAP and TANF Recipients

In addition to the consumer-first workforce system that DEO will implement in coordination with DOE and DCF, the state's strategy also includes implementing the following elements of the REACH Act related to TANF and SNAP recipients:

- Coordinate and facilitate a memorandum of understanding between the DEO and DCF to permit SNAP and TANF clients to pre-certify for WIOA training services without having to physically visit a career center.
- DEO and DCF will measure the performance of workforce related programs and services for participants who receive benefits pursuant to family self-sufficiency programs under Chapter 414, Florida Statutes, and Welfare Transition participants.
- DEO will consult with LWDBs to develop annual performance reports that analyze participants' transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency, including but not limited to, program outcomes, cost-effectiveness, return on investment, co-enrollment in these programs, and the impact of time limits, sanctions, and other welfare reform measures.

The Gig Economy and Florida's Workforce System

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors established a priority initiative to explore the impact of the gig economy on Florida's workforce system. The resulting study, *The Gig Economy and Florida's Workforce System*, considered national research and data on the gig economy; gathered Florida-specific data and trends; and engaged workforce, education, economic development and business partners in discussions about the future of work in Florida.

CareerSource Florida is among the first workforce development organizations nationally to explore the implications of gig work and entrepreneurship in a comprehensive, research-driven manner. Following is some of the key findings from national and Florida-specific research:

- Gig work includes on-call and contract workers, temporary staffing agency and seasonal workers, independent contractors and the self-employed, and independent workers in the online platform community.
- The terms gig, sharing, on-demand and online economy are often used to describe the emerging market for temporary work arrangements that is enabled through online work marketplaces and web-based gig work platforms.

- Key participants in the gig economy include gig workers and gig platforms, the online or app-based services that link gig workers to hiring parties. They also include contracting businesses and contracting individuals both of whom hire gig workers.
- With the continued growth in online gig platform providers that cater to a wider variety of professional, technical, business and consumer services, the gig economy is expanding into new industries and reaching a greater diversity of occupations and skill levels.
- Skills advertised on online platforms including coding or software programming languages; experience in design and editing software programs; familiarity with common customer support or management software packages; proficiency in foreign language or technical editing; l and finance, accounting, legal, architecture, and other accepted accreditations.

Additionally, individuals with disabilities are more likely to be self-employed or work part time than people without disabilities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 10.3% of persons with a disability were self-employed, compared to 6.1% of persons with no disability. Further, in 2020, 29% of workers with a disability were employed part time, compared with 16% of those without a disability. The Study on the Gig Economy and Florida's Workforce System can be viewed at http://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Gig-Economy-Report.pdf

As Florida was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and employers and employees faced a variety of challenges, the state saw an increase in independent work including those seeking necessary and supplemental income. CareerSource Florida worked with a multidisciplinary workgroup including WIOA core partners, businesses, economic development and LWDBs to address areas of opportunity and provide valuable resources for businesses, job seekers and other stakeholders. The work of this multidisciplinary workgroup resulted in the CareerSource Florida Gig Economy Resource Guide and the CareerSource Florida Gig Economy Dashboard.

The CareerSource Florida Gig Economy Resource Guide provides a comprehensive overview of resources available to Florida's gig workers and businesses engaged in the gig economy. This resource guide provides quick access to state and national workforce, education and entrepreneurial resources for gig workers and provides information for entrepreneurs and links to answer frequently asked questions. The CareerSource Florida Gig Economy Resource Guide can be viewed here.

The CareerSource Florida Gig Economy Dashboard helps gig workers and businesses view gig economy activity in Florida at the state, local workforce development area and county level. This dashboard summarizes data from national sources including the U.S. Census Bureau and the Internal Revenue Services and provides an analysis of the pre-pandemic growth of gig work in Florida by county and industry. The CareerSource Florida Gig Economy Dashboard can be viewed here.

These resources provide gig workers and the businesses who employ them information about their opportunities and responsibilities.

(2) Strategies to Align Core Programs

The REACH Act set forth to fully realize the vision of WIOA and establishes key strategies and initiatives designed to strengthen partnerships among workforce stakeholders, increase accountability for the workforce system as a whole, and improve access to the workforce system and alignment of the system to the needs of employers.

Strengthening Partnerships and Coordination
The REACH Act establishes a new REACH Office in the Executive Office of the Governor to coordinate the efforts of workforce stakeholders CareerSource Florida, DEO, DOE, and DCF and ensure collaboration and alignment of initiatives. Furthermore, the law added representation from the Division of Blind Services, in addition to Vocational Rehabilitation, along with representation from DCF to the state workforce development board.

Increased Accountability and Transparency
The REACH Act codified into Florida law a number of programs, initiatives and requirements to increase the accountability for workforce programs both to the state and to the consumer.

- **Money Back Guarantee** – The REACH Act requires school districts and Florida College System institutions to offer a Money Back Guarantee on select programs that provides for a full refund of tuition to students unable to find a job in the field of study within 6 months of completion of the program.
- **Local Workforce Development Board Letter Grades** – Under the REACH Act, the REACH Office will develop criteria for assigning a letter grade to LWDB. The criteria shall be based on LWDB accountability measures and return on investment. The majority of the grade shall be based on the improvement by each LWDB in the long-term self-sufficiency of participants through outcome measures such as reduction in long-term public assistance and the percentage of participants whose wages were higher after program completion compared to wages before participation. Work on the criteria for the letter grades is being completed collaboratively with representatives from LWDBs, DEO, DOE, and DCF.
- **Eligible Training Provider List** – DEO is responsible for establishing new performance standards for eligible training providers and supporting systems to track performance. Additionally, DEO will establish rules for managing the ETPL to allow for access and accountability of education providers.
- **Outcome-Based Funding** – The REACH Act calls for performance funding for education programs to shift from enrollments and certificates earned to outcomes such as placements and wages.

Improved Access and Alignment
The REACH Act establishes a No Wrong Door Strategy ensuring that Floridians have access to all of the assistance and resources available from the various workforce programs no matter where they enter the system – workforce, education, public assistance, etc. Additionally, the REACH Act aims to ensure that Florida's workforce system is aligned to the needs of Florida's businesses and economy.

Consumer-First Workforce System – The state must develop a consumer-first workforce system that improves coordination among required one-stop partners. The system must include a common intake for all customers and allow for shared case management. A feasibility study was commissioned by DEO in Summer 2021 and the results will guide future work toward this strategy.

Labor Market Estimating Conference (LMEC) – The REACH Act establishes a new Labor Market Estimating Conference that will develop official information with respect to real-time supply and demand in Florida's statewide, regional, and local labor markets. All state agencies are required to not only provide the LMEC with any required data, but also utilize the information developed for any decision-making requiring labor market information.

Credentials Review Committee – The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors is required to appoint a Credentials Review Committee that will develop a definition for the value of degree and non-degree credentials. The committee will define a Framework of Quality to assess credentials for inclusion on a Master Credentials List for the state of Florida. Credentials included on the list must lead to middle to high wage jobs, be determined to be in demand at the state or regional level or must be in a sequence of credentials that leads to a middle to high-wage, in-demand job.

Open Door Grant – The REACH Act creates a new grant to increase access to select education programs. This grant will pay up to 2/3 of the cost of a program when the student completes the program and earns the associated credential.

Incumbent Worker Training – The REACH Act establishes new criteria for the awarding or Incumbent Worker Training grants and ensures that training is aligned to the Master Credentials List.

Additional strategies to coordinate with state plan programs and align core programs are addressed in section IV.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

(a) State Strategy Implementation

(1) State Board Functions

State Board
Florida's workforce system is led by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors comprised of business and government leaders charged with guiding workforce development for the state of Florida. The state board, required under WIOA, is supported directly by CareerSource Florida, Inc., a nonprofit organization and professional team that works at the direction of its Board of Directors and with partners across the state to meet its mission. That unified mission is to connect employers with qualified, skilled talent and Floridians with employment and career development opportunities to achieve economic prosperity.

Collectively, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors provides policy direction for talent development programs administered and overseen by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), the designated state workforce agency responsible for workforce policy implementation and the state's administrative and fiscal entity for workforce development programs and funds. DEO partners with CareerSource Florida and the state's 24 local workforce development boards (LWDBs) to strengthen Florida's business climate by supporting employers and helping Floridians gain employment, remain employed, and advance in their careers.

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors includes the Governor and, currently, 22 members appointed by the Governor and legislative leaders. The state board includes leaders in business and industry, government, health and human services, labor, economic development, education and youth and community-based organizations whose contributions influence the development of strategies and policies, ensuring Florida has a robust, globally competitive workforce. The work of the state board and the entire state workforce system is vital to achieving the Governor's priorities for helping Floridians obtain employment and establishing Florida as a top job-creating state.

Continuing his goal for Florida to be No. 1 in the nation in workforce education by 2030, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act into law. The Act sets forth to fully realize the vision of WIOA by strengthening coordination and collaboration among state and local workforce partners, increase accountability and transparency of the workforce system, and improve both access to and alignment of the workforce system to job seekers and businesses. The state workforce development board plays a critical role in strengthening Florida's business climate by implementing the REACH Act and helping to ensure Florida's workforce and education programs align with the needs of business through its strategic policy setting role.

Policy development is one of the primary levers utilized by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors to guide the efforts of the workforce system throughout the state. In direct coordination with DEO, the state board works to ensure compliance with federal and state laws, provide clear expectations regarding ethical conduct, transparency, quality customer service, and improve service delivery for Florida's job seekers and businesses. The state board also provides oversight into the governance of LWDBs. For example, the state board approved an Ethics and Transparency policy, to sustain integrity, accountability and transparency in decisions and actions that earn and protect the public trust. State and LWDBs must conduct business in an open manner and provide electronic or simplified access to information including but not limited to state and local plans, governance and organizational decisions, financial decisions and selection of local one-stop operators.

In 2021, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors approved a Local Workforce Development Area and Board Governance Administrative Policy to provide guidance to Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs), Fiscal Agents, LWDBs, local workforce development board Chairpersons, local workforce development board executive directors, local workforce development board staff and workforce system partners on the requirements for local workforce development area and local workforce development board governance. This policy outlines key roles, responsibilities and requirements of the entities and individuals that make up the workforce development system within a local area. The Local Workforce Development Area and Board Governance policy also identifies and describes required agreements to ensure the local area serves as a jurisdiction for the administration of workforce development activities and expenditure of WIOA adult, dislocated worker and youth funds allocated to LWDBs by the state.

Strategic policies are located on the CareerSource Florida's Policies and Initiatives webpage.

Administrative policies may be viewed on DEO's Policies and Guidance webpage.

The CareerSource Florida network assisted 96,300 job seekers who were reported in the last fiscal last year to have gained employment. The network is committed to expanding business engagement at both the state and local levels. Across the network, nearly 53,700 businesses were served last year through assistance with recruiting, hiring and training.

Governance Structure

The governance structure, through which the state board conducts its work, consists of the board of directors, two councils – the Strategic Policy and Performance Council and the Finance Council, an Executive Committee composed of council chairmen and board leaders appointed by the state board chairman.

The Chair of the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors may appoint committees to fulfill the state board's responsibilities and under the REACH Act, Chapter 445.004, Florida Statutes requires the state workforce development board to appoint a Credentials Review Committee (CRC) as described below.

Strategic Policy and Performance Council

Florida law gives CareerSource Florida the authority to create state employment, education and training policies that ensure programs prepare workers in response to present and future business and industry needs and complement the initiatives of Enterprise Florida, Inc., the state's economic development organization (Section 445.004(6)(a), Florida Statutes). Consistent with CareerSource Florida's strategic goals, priority is given to addressing workforce needs for businesses in the state's target and infrastructure industries.

In 2021, the state board approved a Statewide Workforce Development Board Policy Making Authority and Delegation Policy which clarified the policy making authority of the board and DEO with the state board focusing on strategic policies and DEO given authority to develop administrative policies to support the board strategies. The CareerSource Florida Strategic Policy and Performance Council includes board members who possess relevant experience or expertise in the subject area of the council and serves as an important driver for strategic policies.

The Strategic Policy and Performance Council uses a formal Policy Development Framework process to review existing policies and develop new strategies and policies designed to foster a performance- driven talent delivery system with the ability to serve individuals at all levels and businesses of all sizes to meet the demands of Florida's growing and diversifying economy. The Strategic Policy and Performance Council analyzes, discusses and finalizes strategic policies and performance incentives for the CareerSource Florida network as directed by the Chair of the board.

Recommendations of the Strategic Policy and Performance Council are considered for approval by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors. Nine board members currently serve on this council.

Finance Council

CareerSource Florida's Finance Council includes board members who possess relevant experience or expertise in the subject area of the Council. The Finance Council's primary goal is to ensure the workforce system is in good financial health, its assets are protected, and the state's resources are used appropriately and accounted for sufficiently. Through this effort, the Council assists the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors in ensuring the resources available to the state for workforce training programs and support services are used effectively and efficiently with utmost accountability and transparency to maintain public confidence and trust.

The Finance Council is responsible for directing the statewide allocation of workforce system funding and safeguarding the workforce system's resources and assets.

The Finance Council meets in conjunction with the regular quarterly meetings of the Board of Directors if there is business that needs to go before the Council. Additional meetings, whether held in person or by telephone, may be conducted at the request of the board chairman or the council chairman.

Recommendations of the Finance Council are considered for approval by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors. Five board members currently serve on this council.

Credentials Review Committee

Under the REACH Act, Chapter 445.004(4)(h)(1), Florida Statutes requires the state workforce development board to appoint a Credentials Review Committee to identify nondegree credentials and degree credentials of value for approval by the state board and for inclusion in a Master Credentials List. Such credentials must include registered apprenticeship programs, industry certifications, licenses, advanced technical certificates, college credit certificates, career certificates, applied technology diplomas, associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees and graduate degrees.

The majority of the Credentials Review Committee is appointed by statute. Those members who are not designated by statute are appointed by the Chair and Executive Committee of the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors from a list of qualified, representative and appropriate nominees and volunteers. The Chair and Executive Committee solicit nominees and volunteers from the Executive Office of the Governor; the Reimagining Education and Career help Office; the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors; the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; LWDBs; the Florida Department of Education; the Division of Public Schools; the Division of Career and Adult Education; the Florida College System; the State University System; Independent Education Organizations; the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; industry associations; and Florida businesses.

Executive Committee
Chapter 445, Florida Statutes, states that the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors may establish an Executive Committee consisting of the Chair of the Board and at least six additional board members selected by the chairman, one of whom must be a representative of organized labor. The members of the Executive Committee determine strategic priorities, provide board-level guidance and advice and monitor progress and continued relevancy of strategic priorities.

The Executive Committee:

- Performs duties as delegated by the chairman and/or directed by the board.
- Addresses time-critical matters in cases where the entire board cannot be convened in a timely manner.
- Reviews recommendations of the Finance Council prior to board consideration; and
- Reviews policy and performance recommendations prior to board consideration.

The Executive Committee meets at the request of the Chairman. Seven board members currently serve on this committee.

The following graphic outlines CareerSource Florida Board Governance.

Figure 3.01
CareerSource Florida Board Governance

The state board is committed to leveraging its resources and those of its primary workforce system partners and its strategic partners in business, economic development and education to address talent needs at every skill level and foster a globally competitive workforce.

To ensure the workforce strategies and policies developed by the state board are consistent with approved state and local plans, the board collaborates with DEO, LWDBs and other partners vital to workforce services delivery. LWDB partners hold meetings in conjunction with the state board's quarterly meetings. This provides opportunities to showcase best practices and to identify and address challenges to enhance collaboration and improve performance outcomes.

Regular meetings between DEO, the CareerSource Florida professional team and the leadership of LWDBs provide a forum to discuss strategic issues and to identify policy objectives and best practices for service delivery.

(2) Implementation of State Strategy

(A) Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors includes representation of WIOA's core programs within the Florida Department of Education Divisions of Career and Adult Education (DCAE), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Blind Services (FDBS). WIOA core program teams focus on strategic policy development and implementation and performance accountability reporting as discussed in section II(c)(2). WIOA core program partners continue their focus on areas for improvement and strategy execution. Core program partners report on WIOA primary indicators of performance and other performance information used to ensure continuous improvement.

All core programs work to:

- Fully implement a coordinated business relations program across core programs that includes leveraging community partnerships that engage and support Florida's employers and increases access to employment and educational services.
- Identify opportunities for collaborative case management for job seekers that align common performance measures, prevent duplication of services across partners, and allow for the sharing of cross-referral outcomes.
- Educate potential employees who do not have a high school diploma (or equivalent) and whose English- speaking skills need improvement. By obtaining required education and skills for today's workplace, welfare dependence will decrease, and opportunities will increase for high-skill and high-wage careers.
- Continue efforts to ensure partners recognize and support VR's role as the primary employment agency for all individuals with disabilities, including those with most significant disabilities. VR works closely as a member of the Statewide Employment First Interagency Committee, including the Department of Economic Opportunity, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Division of Blind Services, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Service, Department of Children and Families – Mental Health, Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Florida Developmental Disability Council, ARC of Florida, Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and CareerSource Florida. This promotes the coordination and collaboration of services on a statewide basis.

- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating successful programs. Participate in developing a consortium of supported employment providers that identify, share and promote innovative employment practices.
- Support the planning and development of the consumer-first workforce system established under the REACH Act that provides for a common intake and shared case management among key workforce partners.
- Collaborate on initiatives called for in the REACH Act and described in Section II(c).

CareerSource Florida will work:

- To establish the Credentials Review Committee required under the REACH Act and define nondegree and degree credentials of value for inclusion on a Master Credentials List.
- Implement new priority criteria for Incumbent Worker Training as required by the REACH Act.
- To implement a statewide CLIFF Dashboard in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta to help recipients of public assistance map the timing and magnitude of the loss of benefits as they progress in a chosen career path.
- To support apprenticeship expansion through a network of apprenticeship navigators positioned throughout the CareerSource Florida network.

The Division of Blind Services will work:

- To utilize the quality assurance team to review case records on a monthly basis. Any errors or anomalies will be addressed with the appropriate staff and/or community partner.
- To support and encourage participation in the SSA's Community Work Incentives Coordinator training to provide consumers with accurate information to help them make an informed decision regarding benefits and to make a successful transition to employment.
- To educate staff, partners, and consumers on Workers' Compensation for consumers participating in work-based learning experiences to ensure they understand the process for reporting injuries.
- To increase access to and utilization of accessibility tools by obtaining unlimited licenses for assistive technology such as JAWS (computer screen reader) and Zoom Text (screen magnifier and voice over). Core partners will be able to access this technology by way of the FDBS. The FDBS will also provide licenses to other agencies as requested.
- With core partners to increase participation in apprenticeship programs. The Division will collaborate with the Division of Career and Adult Education to select appropriate apprenticeship models and reach out to employers to encourage sponsorship of registered programs.
- To automate the process of uploading AWARE data on job-ready consumers to the DVR Ability Works Job Portal – enabling upload into TAP and Employ Florida.

(B) Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan

Activities identified in Section A are aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners, not covered by this plan, to avoid duplication. These activities are described below.

Enhancing Partner Collaboration
A unified plan approach was selected for the first plan and two-year modification submitted under WIOA. These plans included required core partners: CareerSource Florida, DEO, the Department of Education, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Blind Services and Career and Adult Education. Florida has built on the collaboration of the WIOA Core Leader Team and smaller workgroups by involving other programs such as the Florida College System, DCF, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, Senior Community Service Employment Program, DEO, Community Services Block Grant Program, and other organizations and stakeholders as needed

Improved communication, regular workforce system updates and identifying greater opportunities for partnerships has helped align WIOA core and required partners around the concept of a flexible and streamlined state and local-driven system of workforce development services and programs that enhance service delivery, leverage available resources to help job seekers overcome barriers, and achieve economic self-sufficiency and mobility. Enhanced partner collaboration has laid the foundation for combined or closer planning with all partners.

SNAP and TANF Program Administration
DEO has a longstanding relationship with DCF, in the administration of the SNAP E&T and TANF/WT programs. DCF refers SNAP and TANF recipients to DEO to comply with work activity requirements and to receive services provided by the workforce system. Services include access to job preparation, training, and other support services designed to assist customers with obtaining employment. Employment and training services, including WIOA and other core partner services, are available to TANF and SNAP recipients in local career centers.

DCF and DEO collaborate on the development of the SNAP E&T state plan and the TANF state plan to ensure the appropriate inclusion in, and coordination with, the state's workforce development system regarding service provision to SNAP and TANF recipients. Additionally, as discussed later in this plan, DEO is working closely with DCF regarding the migration of SNAP E&T and TANF/WT program case management into the state's online labor exchange and case management system, Employ Florida.

Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster Dashboard
CareerSource Florida partnered with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta to develop a Florida-specific Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster (CLIFF) Dashboard (www.floridacliffdashboard.com) that provides information to help users understand their potential earnings from paid employment while also mapping the timing and size of reductions in public assistance needed as individuals progress along in-demand career pathways toward self-sufficiency. The CLIFF Dashboard has been developed and nine Fs are participating in a pilot to assess the usability of the dashboard in a case management and career advising setting in career centers. The primary objective of the pilot is to collect information that will support broader implementation of the tool throughout the state. Pilot regions are encouraged to partner with community organizations to identify financial supports and promote collaborative case management efforts. An early example includes partnerships with Early Learning Coalition and CareerSource Suncoast, who are addressing the loss of childcare subsidies as individuals advance in healthcare professions.

Based on the experience and evidence provided by the pilot cohorts, a plan for the use of this tool statewide will be developed and evidence of best practice partnerships will be shared. CareerSource Florida is partnering with Department of Children and Families to engage DCF staff in the use of the CLIFF Dashboard.

Community Services Block Grant Program
The Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) is administratively housed in the FloridaDepartment of Economic Opportunity but is not included in Florida's WIOA Unified Plan. CSBG operates under a consolidated plan pursuant to federal requirements. This consolidated plan provides the framework for a planning process to identify housing, homeless, community and economic development needs, and resources for meeting those needs. The plan process provides an opportunity for citizens, nonprofit organizations or other interested parties to help define priorities for addressing local and statewide community needs and to tailor a strategic plan for meeting identified needs. The Consolidated Plan describes needs, goals and objectives of the agencies responsible for the administration of certain federally funded programs administered by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The consolidated plan process allows core partners and stakeholders to exchange information on goals and objectives relating to housing, community development and social services and facilities a consolidated approach to meeting those needs. Each affected agency and other interested parties gain insight into the structure and activities of several federally funded programs that have a direct benefit on local communities and the state.

CSBG provides federal funds to designated local governments and non-profit agencies called Community Action Agencies (CAA) to assist eligible low-income households in attaining the skills, knowledge and motivation necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. Local Community Action Agencies partner with LWDBs for the provision of services. These partnerships and alignment of resources are addressed via MOUs and IFAs locally. The agencies may provide a variety of anti-poverty services such as emergency health, food, housing, day care, transportation assistance; housing counseling; financial management assistance; nutrition programs including federal surplus food distribution, community gardening projects, food banks, job counseling, placement and training services, and homeless prevention programs.

The goals of the Community Services Block Grant program align with WIOA goals to:

- Increase access to education, training and employment—particularly for customers with barriers to employment
- Create a comprehensive, high-quality workforce by aligning workforce investment, education and economic development
- Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education and economic development efforts
- Promote improvements in the structure and delivery of services
- Increase the prosperity of workers and employers
- Reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet employer needs and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the state

Since the beginning of 2020, representatives of the Community Services Block Grant Program are invited to monthly WIOA Core Partner Leadership Meetings.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides community service and jobtraining to Florida's older Americans. The Florida Department of Elder Affairs is responsible for state-level administration of SCSEP and contracts with local entities such as AARP Foundation. The National Caucus & Center on Black Aged (NCBA) and National Urban League receive direct funding from USDOL for the provision of employment and training services for older Americans. These entities partner with the LWDBs through MOUs and IFAs to ensure SCSEP's presence in the workforce system and at local career centers.

Since the beginning of 2020, representatives of the Department of Elder Affairs, SCSEP are invited to monthly WIOA Core Partner Leadership Meetings.

Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act

On June 24, 2021, the Governor signed landmark legislation titled the Reimaging Education and Career Help (REACH) Act. This legislation created section 14.36, Florida Statutes. The stated purpose was "to address the evolving needs of Florida's economy by increasing the level collaboration and cooperation among state businesses and education communities while improving training within and equity and access to a more integrated workforce and education system for all Floridians."

This legislation established a new unit in the Executive Office of the Governor, the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help, who purpose is to facilitate alignment and coordination of entities responsible for the state's workforce development system. The head of the office is the Director of the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help and is appointed by the Governor.

The REACH office has the following duties, as outlined in statute:

Serve as the advisor to the Governor on matters related to the state's workforce development system.

- Establish criteria and goals for workforce development and diversification in the state's workforce development system.
- Provide strategies to align and improve efficiency in the state's workforce development system and the delivery of workforce related programs.

- Coordinate state and federal workforce related programs, plans, resources, and activities provided by CareerSource Florida, Inc., the Department of Economic Opportunity, and the Department of Education.
- Oversee the Workforce Development Information System described in s. 1008.40 to verify the validity of data collected and monitor compliance of workforce related programs and education and training programs with applicable federal and state requirements as authorized by federal and state law.
- Serve on the Credentials Review Committee established in s. 445.004 to identify nondegree and degree credentials of value and facilitate the collection of data necessary to conduct committee work.
- Coordinate and facilitate a memorandum of understanding for data sharing agreements of the state's workforce performance data among state agencies and align, to the greatest extent possible, performance measures adopted under ss. 445.004 and 1008.43.
- Develop the criteria for assigning a letter grade for each local workforce development board under s. 445.004.
- Streamline the clinical placement process and increase clinical placement opportunities for students, hospitals, and other clinical sites by administering, directly or through a contract, a web-based centralized clinical placement system for use by all nursing education programs subject to the requirements in s. 464.019.
- Direct the objectives of the Talent Development Council established in s. 1004.015.

Partnering with State Colleges
The Florida College System (FCS) supports, strengthens and expands efforts by its post-secondary institutions to deepen the region's talent pool in targeted sectors.

FCS consists of 28 state colleges focused on serving a diverse population of students, including 60 percent minority and 63 percent female. Through the dedication of trained faculty and college personnel, students from all backgrounds can have access to receive specialized assistance and support to reach their academic and life goals.

The FCS provides open access to an affordable, high-quality education, fulfilling the promise of American democracy that promotes equal opportunity, leading to upward social and economic mobility. It is also an expectation established by the Florida Legislature that each college provide outreach to underserved populations, a key component of access. FCS is committed to employing a number of strategies that ensure students are prepared for college, leading to a four-year degree or employment whether still in high school, first-time enrolled, returning adult, military, non-credit or transfer student.

Dual enrollment, distance learning courses, degrees and specialized support programs offer students flexible access to higher education, providing students with multiple options. Additionally, FCS is the primary point of access to higher education for Floridians who seek to upskill their trade or profession through certified training programs and apprenticeships. Such commitment to open access continues to be an important reason that Florida's students choose FCS institutions to pursue academics and training for successful careers.

The mission of the Office of Articulation is to facilitate the effective and efficient progression and transfer of students through Florida's K-20 education system. Through the work of the Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC), a K-20 advisory body appointed by the Commissioner of Education, the office coordinates ways to help students move easily from institution to institution and from one level of education to the next.

Partnering with Florida Universities and Others
VR supports participants attending Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) for individuals with unique abilities. VR has dedicated IPSE Liaisons located throughout the state to participate in IPSE student selection committees and program development.

A common theme throughout Florida's WIOA implementation strategy is the continued alignment with potential combined planning partners and optional one-stop career center partners. Through the WIOA established interagency teams, increased coordination with these organizations and agencies is sought.

The Florida State University's (FSU) Visual Disabilities Program began offering coursework designed to prepare general and special educators who are, or would like to be, working with students in Florida who have visual impairments. FSU offers this certificate program in two (2) segments through online content delivery and field experiences that will include hands-on practice working with students who have visual impairments. The Division presents programs & current projects to FSU students – creating collaboration and an opportunity for internships with FDBS, LEAs, and our service providers.

FDBS maintains cooperative agreements with Community Rehabilitation Providers and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. FDBS has a long-standing contractual relationship with its statewide CRPs and values the services they provide to clients. For FDBS, CRPs are private, non-profit programs that provide specialized rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Specialized services include education, independent life skills, job training and job placement services to clients and their families who are participating in the VR program.

(C) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

Florida emphasizes integrated service delivery to improve services to individuals. Core program partners are dedicated to developing strong strategic alliances linking employers and job seekers to quality services including employment, training, education, human resource assistance to employers and career and business development which improve the economic growth of Florida counties. The structure of Florida's workforce systems allows for seamless coordination, alignment and provision of services among workforce programs.

Service Delivery Model
The following required partner programs are administered by DEO and delivered by LWDBs through their one-stop career centers: TANF, SNAP E&T, TAA and JVSGLWDBs. This model allows for seamless delivery that supports not only coordination, but co-enrollment across programs when it aligns with participants' needs. Additionally, for required partners that are not administered directly through DEO and the local boards, such as Career and Technical Education programs and Senior Community Service Employment program, the local boards maintain strong partnerships and memoranda of understanding (MOU) that support colocation and/or referrals among partners.

Continuous improvement of service to individuals is paramount to the success of Florida's workforce system. Core partners work to ensure career centers are universally available to serve job seekers regardless of obstacles to employment, level of need, or degree of career development. During COVID-19, career centers pivoted service delivery to remote services leveraging new tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Premier Virtual, and many others. Aligning service delivery to the ever-changing needs of job seeker and business customers remains a key operational strategy especially in communities where there are barriers with transportation and broadband access.

Support Services
When supportive services are provided, LWDBs must develop policies, systems and procedures to ensure coordination with and referrals to other entities to ensure coordination of resources and services that prevent duplication, and to establish limits on the amount and duration of such services.

For example, VR has active representation on 23 of the 24 LWDBs and is represented by FDBS on the remaining board. VR is physically co-located in 17 geographic locations and seeks to expand co-locations.

Stakeholder Involvement
Florida requires LWDBs to seek broad stakeholder involvement in the development of their local plans. Local elected officials, local workforce development board members, core program partners and mandatory one-stop partners are an integral part of the planning process. Each plan addresses how the LWDB coordinates service delivery with core programs such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Florida Division of Blind Services, (FDBS) and the Division of Career and Adult Education and other required partners.

Local Plans
Local plans are required to align with the strategic goals and policies outlined in this state plan, as well as specific local plan instructions as further described in Section IV. of this plan.

Each plan is based on current and projected needs of the workforce investment system, with an increased emphasis on coordination and collaboration at all levels to ensure a seamless system for employers and job seekers, including veterans, SNAP recipients, TANF recipients, individuals with disabilities and individuals in rural areas. Local plans identify the education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of the local area.

Local plans include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of services provided to address identified needs. LWDBs provide a comprehensive view of the system wide needs of the local workforce development area.

Consumer-First Workforce System
Under the REACH Act, DEO, in coordination with DOE and DCF, is tasked with developing a consumer-first workforce system that would align the management information systems across multiple agencies to allow for a common customer intake and integrated case management. The first step of this work was to complete a feasibility study to define what work would be necessary to develop the system. This study was completed in late Fall 2021 and the information learned will be used to guide future work in this area.

The REACH Act calls for the development of a Workforce Opportunity Portal that will assist Floridians to explore and identify career opportunities, identify in-demand jobs, identify skills and credentials needed for specific jobs, access federal, state, and local workforce related programs, and determine the quality of workforce related programs offered by public post-secondary institutions, and identify opportunities and resources to support individuals along their career pathway. This portal will bring together data and information from multiple sources to provide ease of access to critical information as Floridians explore career choices.

The Florida Division of Blind Services

The Florida Division of Blind Services is committed to providing high-quality services to people with bilateral visual disabilities and supporting individuals in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests. The FDBS demands an accountable and exemplary division workforce that ensures high-quality services. Employees receive annual training on division policies/procedures, new federal/state regulations, and the responsibilities of their positions. All employees attend New Employee Orientation where they get an introduction to Client Services and the VR Program.

On September 20, 2017, the FDBS renewed its Intensive Technical Assistance Agreement with WINTAC for five years. WINTAC provides training on specific topics, such as Pre-Employment Transition, VR, Supported Employment, Career Pathways, etc.

The FDBS seeks to employ and develop Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRCs) for services delivery; there are currently 11 CRC holders on staff. The Division encourages counselors who consistently deliver individualized work incentives counseling to seek certification as Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWIC). There are currently four CWIC holders.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The VR counselors assist individuals in pursuing their goals as detailed in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) by using supported employment resources selected to produce the best results for the individual. The EPS and counselor refer job seekers to online tools, such as the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), Employ Florida, National Employment Team, and Ability Works to assist in finding and applying for jobs.

The Abilities Work help desk connects employers to a qualified workforce by sending notifications to the FDBS, VR, CareerSource Florida, etc., when companies have job openings and are looking to fill positions with a qualified person with a disability.

Supervisors, counselors and Employment Placement Specialists (EPS) complete the Employment Outcomes Professionals II training. This training provides staff with marketing and sales skills directly relating to real job development. The EPS and counselors meet weekly to discuss labor market information, work experience opportunities, internships, and the hiring needs of employers.

The VR counselors will actively involve clients and families as appropriate in assessment, planning and decision-making throughout the service delivery process. The Division evaluates the effectiveness of its job placement services and makes needed improvements. The Statewide Business Consultant completes the Employment Outcomes Report monthly to track how many individuals find gainful employment and how long it takes to assist individuals in obtaining employment.

The Division provides ongoing training for its staff and reviews/revises policies and processes to ensure efficient services. Community providers undergo onsite reviews of community with an emphasis on adherence to state policies, compliance with federal regulations, case documentation, IPE signatures, timeliness of eligibility determination, activities tied to the IPE, and authorization approvals.

The quality assurance team maintains knowledge of all current federal/state regulations affecting the VR program. This team conducts case reviews to identify trends and areas in need of improvement.

The Division developed strategies that streamline internal processes to provide quality-efficient services to consumers. The consumer portal within the AWARE case management system assists counselors to maintain consistent communication with consumers.

(D) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

The CareerSource Florida network, including the Business and Workforce Development team at CareerSource Florida and its LWDB partners offers businesses in Florida or businesses relocating to Florida a completely integrated talent support solution consisting of the state's employee recruitment, retention and training services. As a component of its ongoing focus on continuous improvement, CareerSource Florida works to enhance employer satisfaction and measure effectiveness of employer outreach programs.

CareerSource Florida collaborates with industry associations, economic development partners, local board sector-focused business services managers and other partners targeting Florida's Targeted Sectors of Focus. This sector strategy approach helps businesses meet their recruiting, hiring and training needs, while placing a priority on those targeted industries that matter most to Florida's economy.

Florida leverages the Salesforce software platform as a customer relationship management tool, allowing best-in-class management of interactions with stakeholders. This common system enables Florida's LWDBs to work together to enhance customer and business services. Core program partners participate in conversations about using Salesforce in their business outreach activities.

CareerSource Florida provided sector strategy training and assistance to LWDBs on strategies, promotion of services and sharing of best practices to industry groups by collaborating with core partners at the local level to meet business talent development needs. Training has been provided to LWDBs and partners through national experts in sector strategy and work-based learning, workforce development summits and quarterly webinars.

Coordination and alignment between services and partners are created through activities at the local level such as sector rounds, State of Talent events and other strategic initiatives throughout the state. Core partners also serve on LWDBs where their expertise is used to guide sector strategy approaches for business industry groups that leads to talent solutions.

VR formalized a Business Relations Program focused on building and sustaining partnerships with business and industry through effective services driven by employer needs. These partnerships will lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR customers.

The Florida Division of Blind Services is expanding business relationships with employers at the local level to identify and maximize competitive integrated employment opportunities and career exploration opportunities for adults and students. Each district holds membership with one or more chambers of commerce. Employment Placement Specialists work with employers on their hiring needs and setting up work experiences. This gives job seekers opportunities for work-based learning experiences, training and obtaining employability skills.

The Florida Division of Blind Services provides training to employment staff to increase job seekers/ employers' utilization of the Talent Acquisition Portal and Abilities Work. The FDBS works in partnership with chambers of commerce across the state to support the ongoing development of disability-owned business. The Employment Placement Specialists participate in EOP II training to improve marketing skills when communicating with employers. The Employment Placement Specialists build long-term relationships with businesses via outreach and rapid engagement with employers to meet their needs.

Florida seeks to increase collaboration between employer services to leverage expertise and prevent and eliminate duplication. Florida will work to coordinate employers' services across all WIOA program partners.

(E) Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

Florida Talent Development Council
In 2019, the Florida Legislature replaced the Higher Education Coordinating Council with the Florida Talent Development Council (FTDC). The new council, composed of legislative, business, workforce development and postsecondary education leaders, was tasked with developing a coordinated, data- driven, statewide approach to meeting Florida's needs for a 21st century workforce. More specifically, the FTDC was given the statutory responsibility to develop a state strategic plan for talent development that positions Florida to achieve its 2030 educational attainment goal. The "Strengthening Alignment between Industry and Learning" goal is for 60 percent of working-age Floridians to hold a high-value postsecondary credential by 2030. This "SAIL to 60" goal is a priority for Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature. It also is a key initiative in support of the Governor's goal, outlined in Executive Order 19-31, to make Florida No. 1 in the nation for workforce education by 2030.

The REACH Act added the requirement that the Director of the REACH Office direct the objectives of the council. Furthermore, the new law added additional responsibilities for the council including the coordination and communication of statewide efforts to meet supply and demand needs for the state's healthcare workforce, requiring specific annual reporting, and directs resources at the State University System to assist with the healthcare needs study.

The FTDC, which is administratively supported by DEO, is made up of the following members:

- One member, appointed by the Governor, to serve as the chair
- One member of the Florida Senate
- One member of the Florida House of Representatives
- The President and CEO of CareerSource Florida, Inc.
- The President of Enterprise Florida, Inc.
- The Secretary of the DEO
- The Commissioner of Education
- The President of the Florida Council of 100
- The President of the Florida Chamber of Commerce
- One member of the State Board of Education
- One member of the Board of Governors

Additionally, other state education leaders serve in an ex officio, nonvoting capacity. They are:

- The Chancellor of the State University System
- The Chancellor of the Florida College System
- The Chancellor of Career and Adult Education
- The President of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida
- The President of the Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges

The FTDC began meeting in October 2019 to develop a strategic plan framework that addressed the following areas required for inclusion in the new state plan for talent development:

- Identify Florida's fastest-growing industry sectors and the postsecondary credentials required for employment in those industries.
- Assess whether postsecondary degrees, certificates, and other credentials awarded by Florida's postsecondary institutions align with high-demand employment needs and job placement rates.
- Identify strategies to deepen and expand cross-sector collaboration to align higher education programs with targeted industry needs.
- Establish targeted strategies to increase certifications and degrees for all populations with attention to closing equity gaps for underserved populations and incumbent workers requiring an upgrade of skill.
- Assess the role of apprenticeship programs in meeting targeted workforce needs and identify any barriers to program expansion.
- Identify common metrics and benchmarks to demonstrate progress toward the 60 percent goal and how the SAIL to 60 Initiative can provide coordinated cross-sector support for the strategic plan.
- Recommend improvements to the consistency of workforce education data collected and reported by Florida College System institutions and school districts, including the establishment of common elements and definitions for any data that is used for state and federal funding and program accountability.
- Establish a timeline for regularly updating the strategic plan and the established goals.

The Council chose to approach its work by creating five workgroups to develop proposed goals and strategies in the following areas: Policy and System Alignment, Workforce Readiness, Cross-Sector Collaboration and Engagement, Data and Accountability, and Equity and Access. Those groups produced a series of recommendations that were deliberated on, enhanced and approved by the Council. The FTDC also adopted the following vision for this work: "Create and foster cross-sector collaboration between educational institutions, economic development and workforce needs; thereby, creating an accountable talent pipeline toward workforce readiness that fuels economic growth and evolving career pathways for all Floridians. Utilize strategic planning, data accumulation and enhanced government communication to achieve alignment between employer needs and valued and accountable education programs — beginning at elementary school through high school — and continuing to postsecondary and a credential-based education system."

In December 2019, the Council delivered the first plan with 20 goals to the Governor and Florida Legislature, while acknowledging that it is a living plan that will serve as a foundation for the critical work ahead to align programs and credentials with the needs of employers and increase education and training attainment. The plan will be continuously refined as needed. In 2020 and beyond, the FTDC will continue meeting to implement the plan's goals and strategies, as it continues to provide statewide leadership to assist in Florida's progress toward the attainment goal.

In March 2021, the FTDC's strategic plan provided recommendations to raise the number of working-age Floridians with stated credentialing to at least 60% by 2030. According to the Florida Chamber's latest report, Florida Workforce 2030, they are increasingly concerned about the lack of employability skills. Of those surveyed, 81% said they considered the lack of key soft skills a threat to businesses. Per FTDC, the largest gap and key components to Florida's economic growth is talent with a resilient & self-sustaining

employment skillset. The FTDC perspective on skills was sought in 2021 to inform a Department of Education REACH Act Initiative to identify employability skills that were taught in general education courses. The skills identified will inform the creation of an interoperable work skills credential that will be earned upon completion of specified general education courses.

Blending Academics with Career and Technical Education

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation coordinates with state and local education agencies and officials to collaboratively offer youth with disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for careers in the 21st century. Collaborations such as High School High Tech, Project SEARCH, Work-Based Learning Experiences, and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in both classroom and practical instruction that blends acquisition of certificates and work skills that align with occupations available through Career and Technical Education. Hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes and behaviors can be applied in practical or real-world situations help youth to become and stay engaged.

The Florida Division of Blind Services recently developed a new vocational training program at the Rehabilitation Center. The Technology Career Program (TCP) launched in November 2021 and clients must stay on campus to participate in this program. The TCP is for clients who wish to pursue a career in technology and requires basic to intermediate computer literacy. Upon successful completion of this program, an individual will earn a CompTIA A+ certification. The Rehabilitation Center hosts the Assistive Technology Program (ATP) both online and on campus. The ATP is for students with a current job offer or college acceptance to gain technology skills required to go to work/school.

Collaborating with Florida's Universities and Colleges

CareerSource Florida partnered with the DOE Career and Adult Education division to identify short-term, high value credential programs to launch a statewide Get There Florida workforce education initiative. This initiative capitalized on rapid credentialing grants and provided critical information about Career Technical Education (CTE) career pathways and highlighted public education institutions with associated CTE offerings.

Apprentice Florida is another partnership between CareerSource Florida, Department of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Education. The Apprentice Florida website is aimed at Florida employers who wish to establish an apprenticeship program to develop their talent pipelines and provides tools and resources needed to create apprenticeship programs.

The Division of Blind Services works with state universities that provide master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling. Activities include attending board meetings and presenting to college classes upon request to share pertinent information related to the Division and recruitment efforts. Counselors utilize the "Find My College Major" website to assist students who are unsure of their career/education goals. This website serves as a single point of reference for individuals seeking information on Florida's colleges and courses/degrees.

The Division also added the Get There Florida initiative on the DBS website and integrated it into the College Handbook. The FDBS presents the Division's programs & current projects to FSU students annually, creating collaboration and an opportunity towards internships with FDBS, LEAs and our service providers.

Facilitating Postsecondary Education
The REACH Act establishes a number of initiatives aimed at facilitating post-secondary education. The creation of a Credentials Review Committee to create a Master Credentials List that defines degree and nondegree credentials of value will create transparency and allow for funding decisions to be made based on the needs of employers. Furthermore, the development of a Workforce Opportunity Portal will help Florida's students assess different career paths and the education programs aligned with those paths. Finally, the Open Door Grant program established by the REACH Act provides up to two-thirds tuition assistance for select programs at Florida College System and Technical College institutions.

VR has an interagency agreement coordinating transition services with state education officials (FDBS, BEESS). This state-level agreement includes agencies responsible for providing transition services to students leaving high school and going into postsecondary education/training, support services and/or employment. These agencies meet regularly to share information, ideas and initiatives; to collaborate on training and special projects; to cooperate in planning and budgeting; and to support mutually beneficial areas of work.

The VR has a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee. The representative works closely with the regional representatives of Project 10: The Transition Education Network, which is funded through a grant from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services within the Florida Department of Education to the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg.

Project 10 helps Florida school districts and stakeholders increase their ability to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities and improve student academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 helps educators, parents, students, agency representatives and other stakeholders by providing capacity building support to implement secondary transition services, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy and student development and outcomes.

VR counselors serving transition students participate in each area's local interagency councils. Interagency councils are a collaborative effort between VR and Department of Education partners, public high schools, adult service agencies, workforce programs, parents, students, advocates and employers cooperating to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities.

The FDBS has a formal interagency agreement with other divisions within the Florida Department of Education that provide transition services to high school students progressing to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or competitive integrated employment. These agencies agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives; collaborate on training and special projects; cooperate in planning and budgeting; and support areas of work that are mutually beneficial. This agreement functions as a transition services model for improved collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation among the parties included in the agreement.

(F) Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers

Partnerships with School Districts
VR partners to provide Work-Based Learning Experiences with some local school districts. VR Transition Youth services align with the Pre-Employment Transition Services required under WIOA. VR is seeking an expansion of capacity by encouraging school districts to become Pre-ETS providers.

The FDBS provides technical assistance to LEA staff in planning for the transition of students with disabilities to post-secondary education or employment options via IEP meetings. Partners collaborate and promote program services through participation in existing interagency committees and workgroups. The Division will develop training and communications tools for LEA staff to ensure coordination of services, parent outreach, training, and identification of students who may benefit from the Pre-ETS program.

Leveraging Partnerships for Exceptional Education and Student Services
The FDBS and VR entered into an MOU with the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS). This state-level interagency agreement requires partners to provide transition services to students progressing from high school to postsecondary education/training, support services and/or employment. Parties under this agreement meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives; collaborate on training and special projects; cooperate in planning and budgeting; and support mutually beneficial areas of work.

Florida's Eligible Training Provider List
Eligible Training Providers (ETP) of training services or programs of study are entities that are eligible to receive WIOA Title I-B funds for adult and dislocated worker participants who enroll in programs of study through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). ITAs may also be used for WIOA Title I Youth funds to provide training to out-of-school youth, ages 18 to 24. To be eligible to receive training funds under Section 133(b), WIOA, the ETP must be on the state or local Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

The REACH Act positions Florida to help individuals with barriers to education and employment become self-sufficient through a system-wide approach that includes requiring DEO, with input from DOE, the state workforce development board and others, to establish minimum performance criteria for WIOA ETPs to be eligible for inclusion and to subsequently remain on the ETPL. Additionally, DEO is developing codified procedural guidance through an administrative rule that provides information on the ETPL application process and the requirements of initial and continued eligibly.

Beginning PY 2021-2022, existing programs on the state and local ETPLs must meet the minimum performance criteria below for all three measures to be approved for subsequent (continued) eligibility to remain on the state and local ETPLs. A program must have a minimum of five participants to determine if they performed successfully; training programs with fewer than five participants will remain on the ETPL until there is enough data to determine performance outcomes.

Local workforce development boards can adopt more stringent performance criteria for programs. However, programs meeting the minimum criteria below may remain on the state ETPL.

Measures	Definitions	Performance
Completion Rate	The percentage of participants who successfully complete the education or training activity when an outcome is recorded in Employ Florida.	60%
Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.	$4,498
Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program. For youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment.	70%

(G) Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

The CareerSource Florida State Board of Directors has provided funding allocations with an emphasis on leveraging federal and state funds with local providers of services. Local workforce development boards are encouraged to obtain, and document leveraged resources within the project budget. Leveraged resources may be in the form of financial gifts or in-kind services. In-kind services are services that are provided to enhance the project at no charge or at discounted charges. Leveraged resources accomplish three things:

- Contributes to the success of the project
- Strengthens partnerships for future outreach
- Promotes the sustainability of the project

All leveraged resources must be identified by source. Leveraged resources may be obtained from:

- Local Workforce Development Board formula dollars
- Participating businesses or business groups
- Educational institutions (public/private)
- Other sources to contribute financially to the project, including cross-regional collaboration

Pursuant to the REACH Act, the state board approved a Comprehensive Employment, Education, and Training Strategic Policy that calls for LWDBs to use all allowable and available resources to create simplified access, strengthen partnerships to leverage multiple sources of funding to provide services and eliminate duplication of services.

The Governor's vision for increasing access to training and opportunities for individuals is anchored in state statute which requires 50 percent of the formula funds for adults and dislocated workers to be allocated to Individual Training Accounts (ITA). This requirement affirms the Governor's vision that most funds are allocated for direct training-related costs. Costs that qualify under the 50 percent rule include all customer service costs associated with the ITA program such as tuition, fees and books and other training services. Florida allows LWDBs to establish ITA limits and durations.

If necessary, local boards may obtain a waiver from the State ITA reserve requirement by applying to DEO. For consideration of a waiver from the State ITA reserve requirement and to guide the review process by DEO and CareerSource Florida, the requesting LWDB must submit a waiver application identifying the requested reduction from the statutorily required State ITA reserve, specifying the percentage (between 0 and 50 percent) of Title I funds for Adults and Dislocated Workers that the local area proposes to reserve for the required training services. This request must include supporting data describing how the reserved training funds will be spent for State ITAs and each of the other authorized training services, and how the diverted training funds will be spent for other services.

Documentation must substantiate the lack of demand for each authorized training service; the substantially greater demand for career services and business services, relative to training services; the qualitative and quantitative financial impact that the statutorily required State ITA reserve requirement has on the provision of services for clients seeking or receiving training services; or the exceptional circumstances that warrant granting a waiver.

Factors DEO and CareerSource Florida may consider in deciding to grant an ITA waiver may include whether the local area is contractually obligated or is seeking participation in a training program funded by a partner, for which the local workforce development board will provide career services; whether the local area is contractually obligated or is seeking participation in a major economic development initiative of regional impact that will result in significant job creation, to the extent the initiative does not interfere with the priority of services to other clients as required by federal law; or whether the local area is entirely contained within a statutorily designated Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC).

Local workforce development boards requesting a waiver from the State ITA requirement must submit a budget (or proposed budget) showing program components and major breakouts for each program including one-stop services, training providers, supportive services, administrative costs, etc.; a description of how the current and long-term unemployment rate for the local area will be impacted by a waiver, should it be approved; documents identifying the local area's efforts to increase demand from individuals to meet market needs (to address the talent gap); documentation that the local workforce development board and the chief elected official approved the waiver request; and an agreement that, if the conditions warranting the waiver change, the local area commits to comply with the State ITA reserve requirement and will notify CareerSource Florida of such compliance.

In response to the economic environment during COVID-19, the state board identified that jobseekers seeking training required more support than tuition payments in order to engage in training services. Examples of barriers to training included transportation, childcare, the need for income, etc. Accordingly, the state board in collaboration with DEO approved administrative policy governing the use of supportive services and needs-related payments. Additionally, the state board directed the DEO to include supportive services and needs-related payments in the state-level requirement for 50% training expenditure rate.

The state board leveraged governor set aside funding in the 2021-2022 program year to direct funding toward training initiatives for key populations impacted by COVID-19: veterans and military spouses, at-risk Floridians, and low-income, returning adult learners. Skills training Is a priority for each of these populations.

Local workforce development boards are responsible for their respective Targeted Occupations List (TOL) or using the state TOL. Private postsecondary institutions must be licensed with the Commission for Independent Education. All training institutions must report student data to the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) maintained by the Florida Department of Education.

The Florida Division of Blind Services allocates a minimum of 15 percent of its federal allotment to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for all students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for these services. Students who are eligible or potentially eligible may receive Pre-ETS starting at age 14. Recent legislation prescribes starting the discussion about transition as early as age 12. The Division provides Pre-ETS through the age of 21, if the student receives special education or related services under part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and/or if the individual has a disability, for purposes of Section 504 of the Act.

(H) Improving Access to Post-secondary Credentials

Reimagining Education and Career Education Act (REACH)
The 2021 Reimagining Education and Career Education Act was passed by the Legislature with the intent to improve the equity and access for all Floridians to have opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency. The bill creates a system-wide approach which includes the following related to improving access to high quality credentials of value:

- Creates the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help (Office) in the Executive Office of the Governor to provide coordination and alignment in Florida's workforce development system.
- Requires the Office to create a "no-wrong-door" entry strategy whereby Floridians may access services from any workforce partner with a common intake form and case management system.
- Creates an online opportunity portal to provide Floridians access to available state, federal, and local services and evaluative tools to determine short-term employability and long-term self-sufficiency. In addition, the portal provides broader access to education and training options, real-time labor market information, career planning and career services tools, and other support available for workforce training and education linked to middle- and high-wage in-demand jobs.
- Requires the Talent Development Council to coordinate Florida's efforts to meet state healthcare workforce needs, by conducting a gap analysis and provide trend information on nursing programs.
- Requires the CareerSource Florida board to appoint a Credentials Review Committee to identify degree and non-degree credentials of value, develop a Master Credentials List for performance funding, and establish policy direction for funding which prioritizes outcomes and leverages resources to support vulnerable populations.
- Creates the Open-Door Workforce Grant Program to provide grants to school districts and Florida College System (FCS) institutions to cover up to two-thirds of the cost of short-term, high-demand programs
- Creates the Money-Back Guarantee Program, requiring each school district and FCS institution to refund the cost of tuition to students who are not able to find a job within 6 months of completing select programs.
- Creates a new workforce performance funding model for school district and FCS institution workforce programs, requiring one-third of performance funding to be based on rewarding student job placement and the remaining two-thirds on student earnings, with a focus on increasing the economic mobility of underserved populations.

In addition, the bill continues work begun with Executive Order 19-31 in January 2019, which charted a course for Florida to become number 1 in the nation for workforce education by 2030. The 2019 Legislature codified this work with the adoption of similar language in House Bill 7071 and subsequently amended these requirements in the REACH Act. The current statutory language requires the Commissioner of Education to conduct an annual audit of K-12 and postsecondary career and technical education offerings that, at a minimum, must examine:

- Alignment of offerings with the framework of quality developed by the Credentials Review Committee.
- Alignment of offerings at the K-12 and postsecondary levels with credentials or degree programs identified on the Master Credentials List
- Program utilization and unwarranted duplication across institutions serving the same students in a geographical or service area.
- Institutional performance measured by student outcomes such as academic achievement, college readiness, postsecondary enrollment, credential and certification attainment, job placement, and wages.

Using the findings from the annual audit, the Commissioner of Education shall phase out career and technical education offerings that are not aligned with the framework of quality, do not meet labor market demand, do not meet institutional performance, or are unwarranted program duplications. The commissioner shall encourage school districts and Florida College System institutions to offer programs that are not offered currently.

The Education meets Opportunity Platform (EMOP) will provide an interoperable data analytics tool—comprised of four data dashboards—for all of Florida's workforce education and training programs (degree and non-degree) through the state's selected vendor, PAIRIN. It aims to secure real-time, accurate, and comprehensive data visualization and analytics to provide persistent and reliable analytics for the Department of Education and authorized stakeholders on academic program inventories, program performance, and labor market supply and demand. The interactive, interoperable data analytics tool/solution will function as a business intelligence tool, with the ability to ingest and integrate large volumes of data, aggregate, analyze, and summarize the data in the form of lucid, clear, and user-friendly key performance indicators.

The first iteration of the EMOP is planned to be completed in fall 2022 and the tool will be internal facing to the Florida government agencies (the Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, CareerSource Florida, Florida Department of Children and Families, and REACH Office and Executive Office of the Governor). In coming years, the next iteration of EMOP is intended to be externally facing to support analytics for Florida College System and district stakeholders. One of the four dashboards in EMOP will serve as an active program inventory using the data submitted to FloridaShines.

These data will then be connected to other dashboards of the EMOP, in order to allow stakeholders to view both program inventory information, program performance indicators, and labor market demand data in a single hub. These data will be used to help inform the agency's recommendations for expansion of existing programs and development of new programs to increase access to meaningful educational pathways that lead to gainful employment.

Florida has authorized a new Open Door Grant program to help support and fund Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. IET programs provide adults the opportunity to build their reading, math, writing and English language skills alongside workforce training activities in an integrated model, which accelerates the ability to move into employment. FDOE will continue to provide support as we expand this initiative.

Florida Career and Professional Education Act

CareerSource Florida collaborates with the Department of Economic Opportunity, DOE's Division of Career and Adult Education and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to provide certification opportunities to secondary students. Created by the Florida Legislature in 2007, the Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act provides students with cutting-edge training and earned industry certifications required for high-skill, high-wage jobs in Florida's target and infrastructure industries.

Through collaborative partnerships between education, industry, workforce and economic development entities, CAPE offers new and meaningful opportunities for students. CAPE supports local and regional economic development and helps attract and retain high-value industries to develop a diverse, knowledge-based economy.

Data reveal that students earning industry certifications have more positive student performance with higher average GPAs, lower rates of chronic absenteeism and disciplinary actions and a lower dropoutrate. Students who earned a certification were more likely to take Advanced Placement or dual enrollment courses than students who did not earn a certification. The earning of industry certifications correlates with higher student performance among high school students. Academy students who graduate with an industry certification outperform the academy students who graduate without an industry certification, with a higher placement rate in employment or post-secondary education. Public school districts are awarded additional funding for students earning industry certifications.

The Division of Blind Services will develop career pathways for occupations in high demand, including occupations with industry recognized certificates. Under DOE's Pathways to Career Opportunities grant, the Division intends to expand participation in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. Students, parents, and the community will receive notification of apprenticeship opportunities. The Division will work with businesses and employers to increase work-based learning experiences. The FDBS has a pilot project with the Miami Lighthouse and Beacon Council to increase participation in apprenticeship programs. During the project's early inception, three individuals with visual impairments participated in programs that may lead to permanent job placements. The FDBS began working on establishing a Division-sponsored apprenticeship program in August 2021. The FDBS will serve as the sponsor and employer in a competency-based program that will lead to a recognized credential as a Web Accessibility Specialist.

Beginning with the 2021 – 2022 school year, approved Career and Professional Education (CAPE) certification lists will be included on the Florida Master Credentials List. The Credentials Review Committee will implement a process for evaluating new credentials for inclusion on the Master Credentials List. It is anticipated that this process will be available in Spring 2022.

The list of industry certifications is updated annually, and final funding determinations are made by the Florida Department of Education. More information is available on CareerSource Florida's website and on the Department of Education, Division of Career and Adult Education's website.

Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Youth Program
The Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as Work-Based Learning Experiences, High School High Tech, Project SEARCH and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education and provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes and behaviors can be applied. HSHT is a community-based partnership made up of students, parents and caregivers, businesses, educators and rehabilitation professionals. The program is designed to provide high school students with all types of disabilities the opportunity to explore jobs or postsecondary education leading to technology- related careers. HSHT links youth to a broad range of academic, career development and experiential resources and experiences that will enable them to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. Project SEARCH is a unique program designed to help students with I disabilities successfully transition from high school to the workforce. Over the course of a year, students have the chance to participate in targeted internships hosted at job sites across the state of Florida. It's a collaboration between school districts, community partners, host sites, and VR.

These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and other work experiences, often lead to successful employment. For some students, these programs include earning post-secondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers.

VR involvement in these collaborations provides funding for participants to receive needed services and other supports. This shared support helps partner programs to serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities. In addition, VR continues to deliver Pre-ETS under WIOA through a variety of initiatives throughout the year.

Coordination of transition activities is a team effort between the student, parent(s) or caregiver(s), educators, service providers, and friends. The team designs activities to produce an outcome that includes maximum independence. The team selects goals for adulthood based on the individual student's needs, preferences, and interests, and lists activities/services designed to reach these goals. The desired outcome can include any number of goals such as post-secondary education, vocational training, employment, supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

Activities may include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school, adult-living objectives, functional vocational evaluation, and the acquisition of daily living skills. A well-managed transition gives young adults the chance to have the greatest possible independence, competence, enjoyment, and mastery of life.

Adult Education Integrated Education and Training Program
The Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) promotes the planning, development and implementation of an integrated education and training (IET) service approach that provides concurrent and contextualized adult education and literacy activities in combination with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. This program is afforded to all levels of adult education students. Professional development is provided to support the success of IET programs.

The IET service approach provides all levels of adult education students the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to:

- Transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs.
- Obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency; and
- Exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

All IET programs must include the following three components:

- Adult education and literacy activities (§463.30).
- Workforce preparation activities (§463.34); and
- Workforce training for a specific occupation or occupation cluster which can be any one of the training services defined in section 134(c)(3)(D), of WIOA.

To meet the "integrated" requirement of IET, all services must include the following:

- Adult education and literacy activities run concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.
- Activities are of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available, particularly with respect to improving reading, writing, mathematics, and English proficiency of eligible individuals.
- Occur simultaneously; and
- Use occupational relevant instructional materials.

The integrated education and training program must have a single set of learning objectives that identifies specific adult education content, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training competencies, and the program activities function cooperatively.

To prepare adult education students for high-skilled, high-wage careers, Florida Department of Education requires institutions to consider the end goal of an IET program and ensure that it aligns with a credential of value. As part of the IET Program of Study template and approval process, institutions are required to describe the credential of value that the IET program trains for. Adult Education providers are required to submit at least one IET program per funding source and may submit new IET programs for approval to the Department of Career and Adult Education throughout the year.

(I) Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

Florida WIOA partners continue to work collaboratively with economic development stakeholders to support a shared strategic vision for the state's workforce and economic development systems. Building and strengthening Florida's workforce remains a key economic development priority and, under Governor DeSantis' leadership, Florida WIOA partners have remained at the forefront of economic recovery and growth efforts by continuing to enhance alignment among the state's education, workforce and social safety net systems to improve equity and access to employment, training and career pathways.

CareerSource Florida works with a series of state, local and regional business and economic development organizations to drive economic mobility, resiliency and growth. Among its many state-level partners are Enterprise Florida, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), the Florida Economic Development Council (FEDC), the Florida Council of 100, Space Florida, the Florida Small Business Development Centers Network, FloridaMakes and the Rural Economic Development Initiative. Coordinated through the Executive Office of the Governor, leaders from CareerSource Florida, Enterprise Florida and DEO work closely to maintain a unified approach to job creation, retention and business expansion.

CareerSource Florida's board chairman sits on the Enterprise Florida Board of Directors and Enterprise Florida's vice chairman is a member of the state workforce development board. Florida's LWDBs join CareerSource Florida in active leadership and collaboration with local and regional economic development organizations through FEDC to advance economic development opportunities in Florida communities of all sizes.

Florida's business community is strongly united around the vision and goals of the Florida Chamber Foundation-developed Florida 2030 Blueprint, a two-year research program that engaged business and community leaders including local and state workforce leaders in each of Florida's 67 counties to identify trends and factors that drive regional economies. This research has resulted in key targets and strategies that will:

- Improve Florida's talent pipeline
- Lead to the creation of good jobs by diversifying Florida's economy
- Prepare Florida's infrastructure for smart growth and development
- Continue building Florida's business climate
- Make government and civics more efficient and effective
- Champion Florida's quality of life

With their talent development strategies and workforce investments, Florida's state and LWDBs continue to be champions of and contributors to the statewide goals set by Florida's business community through the Blueprint working with local chambers, businesses, community and economic development as well as education partners to drive toward benchmarks to secure a stronger and more inclusive economic future for Floridians, employers and communities.

As identified by Enterprise Florida, the state's principal economic development organization, the statewide sectors of focus are Advanced Manufacturing, Aviation and Aerospace, Cleantech, Defense and Homeland Security, Financial and Professional Services, Information Technology, Life Sciences and Logistics and Distribution. State and local labor market data informs policy development and decisions made by WIOA core programs and LWDBs in support of economic growth, directed toward statewide, regional and local targeted industry sectors through talent solutions such as sector strategies.

In fact, Florida economic development professionals have continued to cite CareerSource Florida network training programs and other business and talent recruitment services as essential contributors to their effort to retain and expand jobs across the state and in their local communities.

(b) State Operating Systems and Policies

(1) State Operating Systems

(a) State Operating Systems that Support Coordinated Implementation of State Strategies

Florida's workforce system data infrastructure comprises a strong federated model (interconnected) for data collection, management and reporting systems. The first system is responsible for collection, management and reporting of unemployment compensation data; the second system is the central hub for data collection management and reporting for Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), WIOA and state workforce/employment initiatives; and the third system collects data on SNAP and TANF individuals required to participate in employment and training activities.

Employ Florida is the state's online labor exchange and case management system that helps connect job seekers to jobs and helps businesses find the talent they need. Employ Florida is administered by DEO, through a contracted vendor, and located at employflorida.com. This virtual job-matching tool provides access at no charge to individuals, helping them develop a resume, assess their skills, find training to gain the skills they need and apply for jobs. Businesses use the system to post jobs and find the talent they need. In addition, the system includes labor market information by industry, occupation and region. Employ Florida provides a comprehensive online software that encompasses a full suite of components that fulfill the requirements of labor exchange, case management, labor market information, service tracking, fund management, provider services and federal reporting.

Necessary data points required by workforce programs are collected using a single Common Intake, making it easier for local staff to deliver effective services to individuals. The system encourages collaboration and improved performance across WIOA Title I and III workforce programs and the TAA and JVSG programs. Employ Florida saves a significant amount of staff time by determining eligibility of multiple programs through a single form that collects all required data fields.

Florida's Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits management information system is responsible for collection, eligibility and monetary determinations, management and reporting of unemployment compensation data. The Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits management information system interfaces claimant data into Employ Florida for additional or program-required job assistance services and assessments. A modernization project is underway for the Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits system.

Florida's One-Stop Service Tracking (OSST) system collects referral, participation and non-compliance data on SNAP and TANF recipients required to participate in employment and training activities. Work requirement participants are referred from the DCF FLORIDA system to OSST nightly for program engagement. Employment and program non-compliance are also reported to DCF in the nightly interface.

While all three systems operate under different business rules, according to their programs,

the OSST system and the DCF FLORIDA system communicate nightly utilizing batch job interfaces. The OSST system and Employ Florida systems process a transactional job through an interface. Not all LWDB's use the transactional job.

DEO provides daily operational management of these systems and has access to all system databases where data quality and data integrity are assessed. Data is analyzed which supports informed program decisions and implementation strategies.

The Division of Public Schools, the Division of Florida Colleges and the Division of Career and Adult Education must coordinate to develop consistent system-wide relational databases for student, personnel and facilities data. The databases are described fully below in section (B) Data-collection and Reporting Processes.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation uses an automated process to upload customer work goals from the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to Salesforce, which allows the Abilities Work Help Desk and VR Business Relations staff to facilitate referrals of qualified job seekers to positions with VR business partners. Business customers are provided information on the Abilities Work web portal at abilitieswork.employflorida.com which link employers and job seekers with disabilities. Job seekers are referred to Employ Florida to post their positions where they have the option to indicate their preference to recruit and hire individuals with disabilities in their Employ Florida profile.

The Florida Division of Blind Services uses an automated process to upload client data from its comprehensive case management system, AWARE, to the Ability Works Job Portal; thus, enabling upload into Employ Florida. The Florida Division of Blind Services uses the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) to increase opportunities for competitive integrated employment and interfaces with the Occupational Information Network (O*Net). O*Net includes detailed descriptions of the world of work for use by job seekers, workforce development and human resource professionals, students and researchers.

The Career Index Plus (TCI+) is a career information system that collects information from the Labor Market using various resources and transfers it into a single, user-friendly site. Data is current and accessible to our clients to assist them with making informed career choices. The Florida Division of Blind Services – in collaboration with community partners – is making progress in developing apprenticeship opportunities for clients.

The REACH Act calls for the Department of Economic Opportunity to spearhead a consumer-first workforce system that allows for common intake across partners and integrated case management. The DEO commissioned a feasibility study in Fall of 2021 and the results of this study will guide future work toward integration of systems.

(B) Data-collection and Reporting Processes

Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP)
One of Florida's most successful innovations in evaluation and performance tracking is the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) established at the Florida Department of Education. This program helps evaluate the effectiveness of postsecondary education and training programs, particularly vocational education, and similar career preparation programs. The scope of groups to be tracked rapidly expanded to cover most job training and placement programs including WIOA, Wagner-Peyser (WP), Adult Education, Job Corps, Veterans, Welfare Transition (WT)/TANF, SNAP, Apprenticeship, Reemployment Assistance (RA) claimants and ex-offenders. Nearly 600 groups or sub-cohorts are tracked.

FETPIP follow-up data are electronically derived from Reemployment Assistance quarterly wage records, federal military and civilian personnel records, public assistance, incarceration/parole records and continued education rosters. This data informs Core Partner programs in completing quarterly and annual reports at the federal and state levels. Reports include extensive detail and longitudinal capabilities.

Each group is tracked for at least two years. Many groups, including high school graduates and dropouts, certificate programs and all levels of higher education, are tracked over much longer periods. Quarterly reports detailing employment and public assistance status and outcomes are run and analyzed. For detailed information on FETPIP, including examples of annual outcome reports, please visit the Florida Department of Education's website.

FETPIP data are provided to LWDBs, enabling them to evaluate the strength of training programs offered throughout the state.

For the purpose of developing and producing reports as required under WIOA Section 116, the Employ Florida system serves as the official system of record for federally required data for the following programs:

- Title I Adult
- Title, I Dislocated Worker
- Title I Youth
- Title III Wagner-Peyser
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- National Dislocated Worker Grant

To meet the WIOA performance requirements, Florida successfully implemented the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data sharing agreement. Geographic Solutions via Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) sends a file of individual records to FETPIP for matching to obtain Florida wage information. FETPIP matches the individual against wage data received from the Florida Department of Revenue and returns the information via the same SFTP. Geographic Solutions uploads the wage information on each individual into the Employ Florida Virtual One-Stop system.

The Department of Economic Opportunity receives a data file generated from Geographic Solutions with all program information including the wages. Geographic Solutions then creates the file for reporting and provides the file to DEO. Once DEO receives the file from Geographic Solutions the SWIS data is incorporated into the data file by DEO. This file is used to generate the WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, VETS and Trade Act federal reports through the WIPS.

In accordance with Chapter 1008.35, Florida Statutes, Chapter 1008.40, Florida Statutes, Chapter 1008.41, Florida Statutes, Chapter 1008.405, Florida Statutes and Rule 6A-1.0014 Florida Administrative Code, the Division of Public Schools, the Division of Florida Colleges and the Division of Career and Adult Education must coordinate to develop consistent system-wide relational databases for student, personnel and facilities data.

The following table summarizes the system used for agencies to report student level information on adult education students to the Florida Department of Education.

Sector	Name of System	Description
School Districts	Workforce Development Information System (WDIS)	This is the comprehensive reporting system for all adults enrolled in programs offered through school districts. WDIS was established in 1998-99. WDIS system is required in Florida Statutes. Link to Database Manuals: https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/CCTCMIS/dcae-dis/database-handbooks.stml
Florida College System	Florida College System Student Database	This is a comprehensive reporting system established through a specific appropriation enacted by the 1987 Legislature. The Florida colleges were required to develop and implement a statewide comprehensive management information system linking all levels of the state education system. The Integrated Database consists of the Admissions Database (ADB), the Student Database (SDB), the Personnel Database (PDB) and the Facilities and Capital Outlay Database (FCO). The Student Database was designed in accordance with the General Education Provisions Act 20 USC 1221(e-1) Proviso Language. Link to Database Manuals: http://fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/ CCTCMIS/college-data-diction.stml
Community-based Organization	Student Information System for Community-based Organizations	Developed in 2010 by the Division of Career and Adult Education for all adult education providers who are not a local educational agency to provide student-level information on enrollment and performance of adult education students being served with federal AELFA grant funds.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation uses the RIMS Case Management System to collect and trackdata required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. VR continually enhances RIMS for thorough data collection and advanced analysis to evaluate agency performance and identify methods that improve service delivery/program outcomes.

The Florida Division of Blind Services uses the AWARE Case Management System to collect and track data required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The FDBS continually enhances AWARE for thorough data collection and advanced analysis to evaluate agency performance and identify methods that improve service delivery/program outcomes.

(2) State Policies

Statewide Workforce Development Board Policymaking Authority and Delegation Policy
Policy development and implementation is a critical aspect of managing organizational performance. Systematic identification of the need for policy, a structured policy development process, aneffective policy evaluation and approval process and consistent approaches for effective outreach, communications and training are essential components of a comprehensive policy framework.

Organizations with sound approaches for the development and deployment of strategic and administrative policies are better positioned for successfully executing strategy and conducting effective and efficient day-to-day operations.

The governance structure of CareerSource Florida facilitates strategic planning. As the principal workforce policy organization for the state of Florida, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors is focused on strategic policy and aligning federal, state and local workforce development priorities.

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, the CareerSource Florida professional team and DEO follow a comprehensive policy development framework designed to support the vision, mission, values, strategies and operation of the state's workforce development system. The Policy Development Framework applies to the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, the CareerSource Florida professional team and DEO and defines a best practice process for joint development and implementation of strategic and administrative policies as well as the documents that serve as alternatives to formal policies. Alternatives to formal strategic administrative policy and workforce guidance include communiques, memoranda, and programmatic resource guides that provide information and guidance and are used to enhance and supplement the deployment of formal policies.

In June 2021, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors approved a Statewide Workforce Development Board Policymaking Authority and Delegation Policy and formally adopted a Policy Development Framework which was developed by the CareerSource Florida professional team and the Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support.

The Policy Development Framework differentiates between strategic and administrative policies and identifies best practices for developing and implementing these policies. The Framework describes how policies and alternatives to formal policies are developed, approved and implemented.

Strategic Policies
CareerSource Florida Board of Directors strategic policies include high-level principles or directional statements that inform or clarify federal or state legislative policy or workforce system strategies for the state of Florida. These policies direct statewide workforce efforts through a variety of means including but not limited to establishing standards or priorities for workforce delivery, directing workforce funding, and defining statewide strategic goals. Strategic policies set expectations and direct decision making at the state level and may result in the development of administrative policies by DEO and/or local policies by the LWDBs.

Strategic policies are presented to, approved and adopted by the state workforce development board.

Administrative Policies, Operational Guidance and Workforce Guidance
CareerSource Florida administrative policies and operational guidance are developed by the Department of Economic Opportunity Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support in consultation with the CareerSource Florida professional team using best practices from the Policy Development Framework. Administrative policies and operational guidance include business rules, requirements, processes and responsibilities that expand, explain or further specify federal and state legislative policy as well as board approved strategic policy.

Administrative policies and operational guidance are binding on the workforce system and the implementation of these items by the LWDBs are subject to audit and monitoring by DEO.

Administrative policies and operational guidance are reviewed by the CareerSource Florida professional team, in collaboration with DEO, to determine when policies require approval by the state workforce development board. The state workforce development board is notified of all administrative policies updated and/or issued.

Workforce guidance is information that explains a legislative, strategic or administrative policy. Guidance may include best practices, supporting information, recommendations, Technical Assistance Letters, memoranda, communiques, desk aids, resource guides and other resources. Workforce guidance is reviewed and issued by DEO and may include consultation with the CareerSource Florida professional team.

The Statewide Workforce Development Board Policymaking Authority and Delegation Policy describes the criteria for determining which policies require the state workforce development board's approval versus those policies which do not require the state workforce development board's approval but do require consultation with the CareerSource Florida professional team. This policy also requires that the state workforce development board be notified of new administrative policies or changes to existing guidance.

The Statewide workforce Development Board Policymaking Authority and Delegation Policy is posted on CareerSource Florida's website.

Policy Development Framework
The CareerSource Florida Strategic Policy and Performance Team and the Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support meet regularly as a Policy Development Workgroup to develop strategic policies initiated by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors and administrative policies and guidance necessary for the workforce system. Subject-matter experts and stakeholders are included in this workgroup as necessary.

The CareerSource Florida Policy Development Framework is applied at the state level and is recommended as a guide for the development of local operating procedures and policies. The framework is made available to any state workforce system partner in policy development and implementation.

Figure 3.02
Policy Development Framework

The Policy Development Framework consists of three major components:

- Establish Policy Need;
- Develop Policy; and
- Implement and Evaluate.

Federal and state program guidance is communicated to local workforce partners through participation in state-level policy development activities. Strategic and administrative policy documents are shared with state and local partners who provide consultation to the Policy Development Workgroup prior to strategic or administrative policy being issued. Once feedback from local boards, core partners and stakeholders has been reviewed and incorporated, if necessary, strategic and administrative policies are distributed throughout the workforce investment system by the Department of Economic Opportunity.

Information about the Policy Development Framework and features of CareerSource Florida strategic and administrative policy are available on CareerSource Florida's website.

State Policies that Support the Implementation of the State's Strategies
State policies updated since 2020 to support the strategies in Section II include:

- Apprenticeship Policy
- Availability of Services to Floridians
- Board Governance and Leadership
- CareerSource Florida Board of Directors Conflict of Interest Disclosure Policy
- Comprehensive Employment, Education and Training Strategy
- Incumbent Worker Training Program
- Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion System Strategic Policy
- State Workforce Development Board Roles and Responsibilities

The U.S. Department of Labor developed a uniform policy for acceptable methods of cost allocation and resource sharing with respect to funding the one-stop delivery system. Under WIOA and consistent with the Uniform Guidance, funding provided by the one-stop partners to cover the operating costs, including infrastructure costs and additional costs, of the one-stop delivery system must be based on the partner program's proportionate use of the system and relative benefit received.

WIOA requires LWDBs, with the agreement of the chief elected official, to develop and execute MOUs with required partners on the operation of the one-stop delivery system in the local service delivery area. Each LWDB must include an IFA in the MOU with required partners. The IFA details how infrastructure costs for the one-stop delivery system will be funded in the local area. LWDBs and career centers are expected to act in good faith and negotiate infrastructure costs and additional costs of operating a local one-stop delivery system in a transparent manner.

CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 106 – Memorandums of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements provides LWDBs with the requirements and procedures for developing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) under WIOA.

Links to strategic and administrative policies that support the implementation of the state's strategies and guidelines for one-stop partner programs are posted on the websites below:

- CareerSource Florida Strategic Policies
- CareerSource Florida Administrative Policies and Workforce System Guidance
- Adult Education Assessment Technical Assistance Paper
- Adult High School Technical Assistance Guide
- Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual
- Division of Blind Services Client Services Policies

The Florida Division of Blind Services
The Florida Division of Blind Services has a policy team to continually examine policies and procedures. The team reviews select policies on a quarterly basis. Using data derived from the quality assurance reviews, the team determines which policies require immediate review.

(3) State Program and State Board Overview

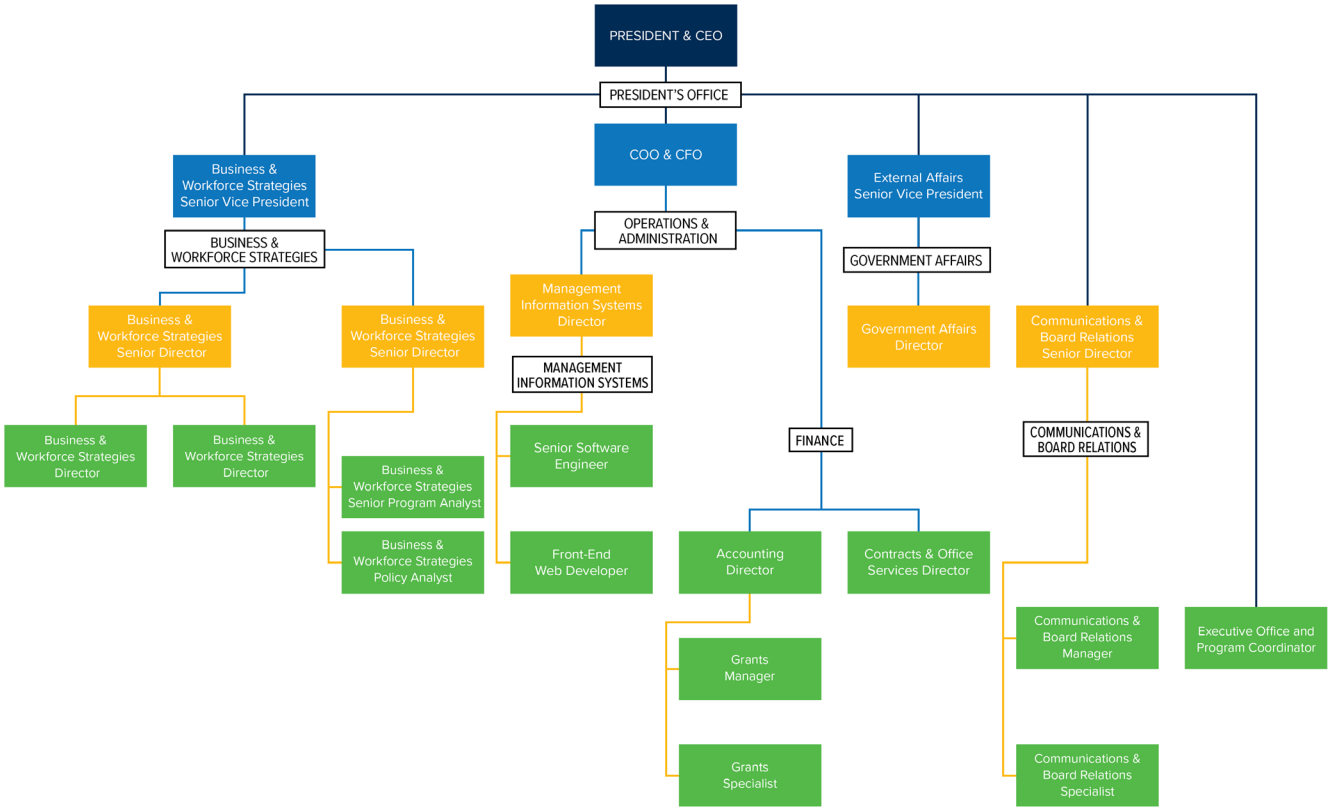
(B) State Agency Organization

CareerSource Florida
The state workforce development board, known as the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, is established pursuant to WIOA, Public Law 113-128, Title I, Section 101. Chaired by the Governor, the state workforce development board establishes and directs the vision for the state workforce system, known as the CareerSource Florida network, to align with strategic partners within workforce development, education and economic development systems. The CareerSource Florida network's strategic partners are those described within the federal WIOA and Florida Statutes.

The CareerSource Florida network comprises the state workforce development board, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the LWDBs, chief local elected officials, local boards of directors and local career centers.

The state board hires the President and CEO of CareerSource Florida, Inc. and authorizes CareerSource Florida to develop and coordinate, under the consent and guidance of the board, the strategic, policy development, financial and programmatic direction of its vision for the state's workforce system.

Figure 3.03 CareerSource Florida, Inc. Organizational Chart

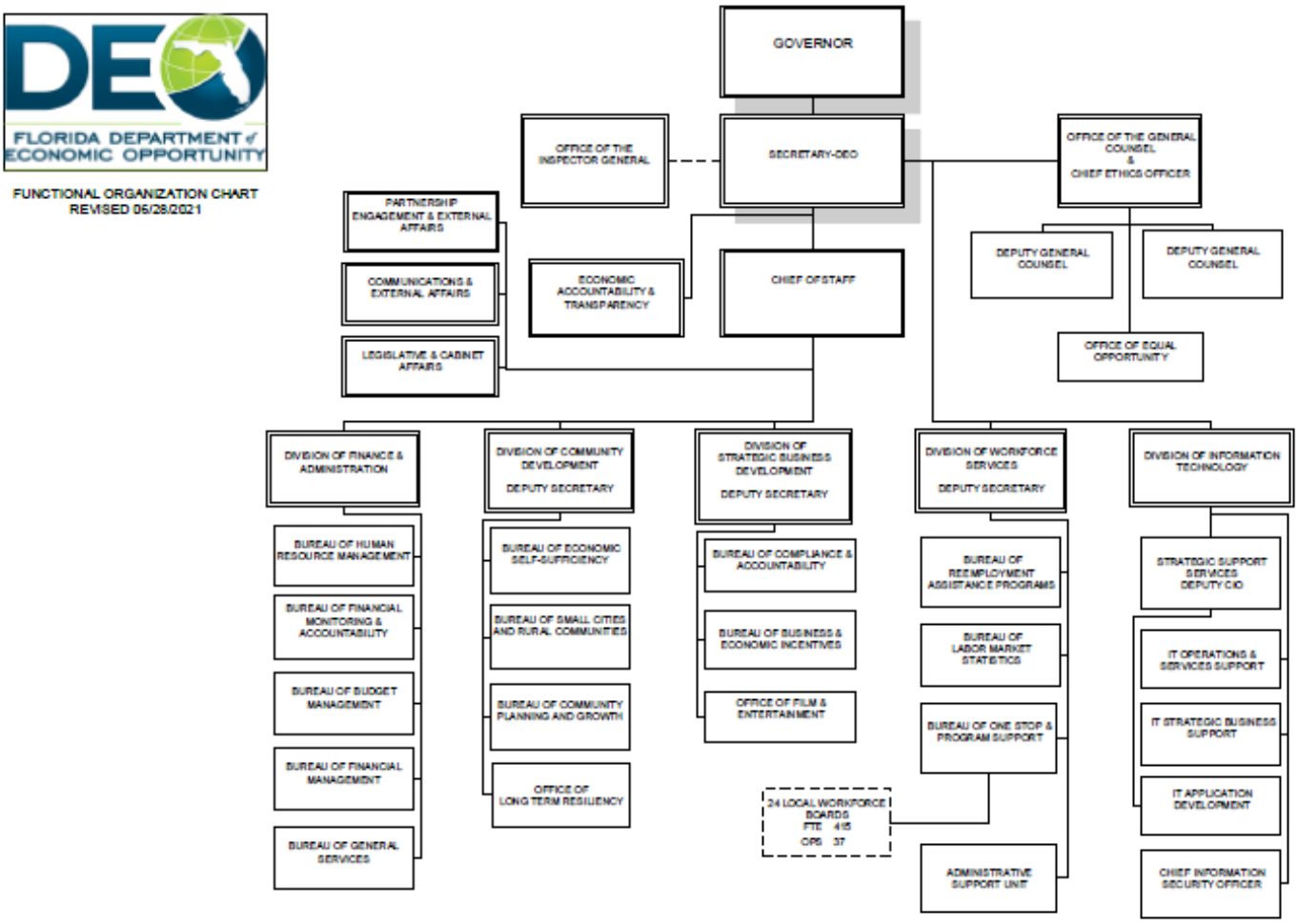


Department of Economic Opportunity

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is the Governor's agency for workforce support and training, economic development and community development. DEO partners with CareerSource Florida and the state's 24 local workforce development boards (LWDBs) to strengthen Florida's business climate by supporting employers and helping Floridians gain employment, remain employed and advance in their careers. DEO oversees the administration of the state's workforce system and receives and accounts for federal funds for the system.

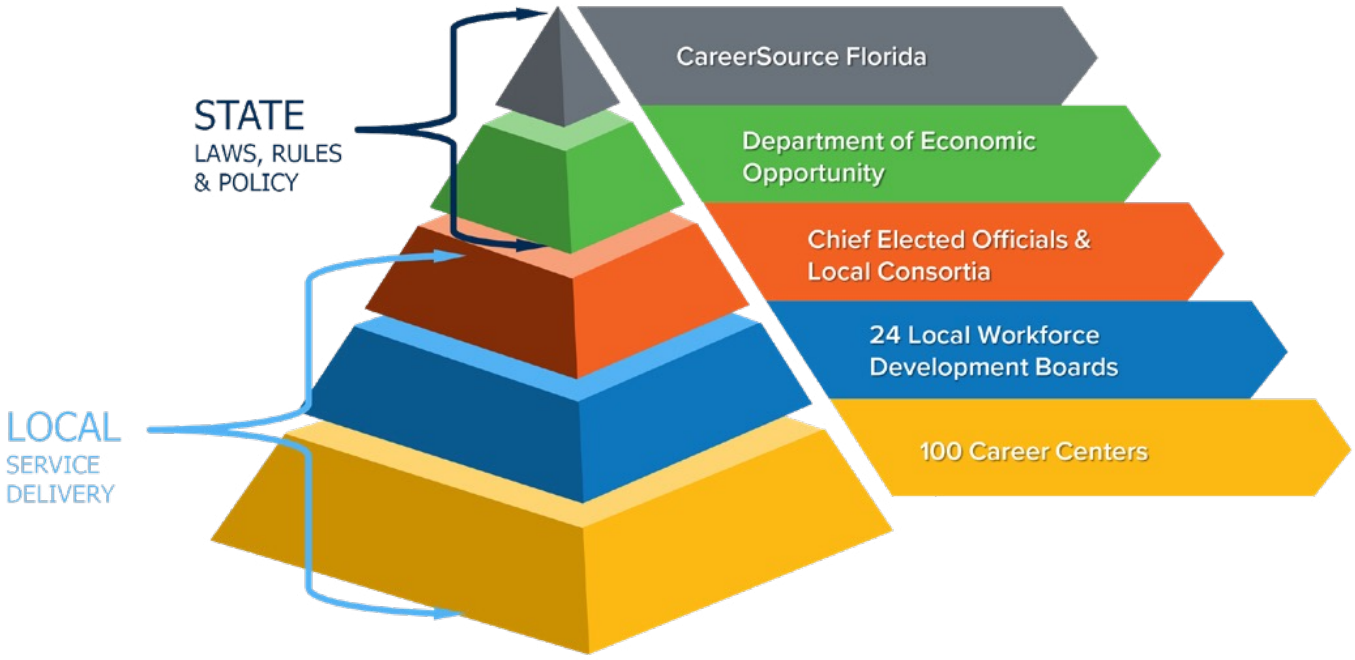
DEO reports financial and performance information to USDOL and other federal organizations. DEO distributes workforce guidance and policy initiatives and provides training, technical assistance and monitoring to LWDBs. DEO operates Florida's Reemployment Assistance program, Workforce Statistics and Economic Research and many other programs and initiatives.

Figure 3.04
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Organizational Chart



Administration of the state's workforce policy, programs and services is carried out by DEO and the business led LWDBs. Services are delivered through over 100 career centers (which includes affiliate sites and specialized centers) throughout Florida and through the state's online labor exchange and case management system, Employ Florida, at employflorida.com. Programmatic and administrative requirements are described in a Grantee-Sub-Grantee Agreement executed by DEO and each LWDB, requiring their compliance with all federal and state laws, regulations and any special state requirements.

Figure 3.05
Florida's Workforce System Organization



Florida Department of Education
The mission of the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) is "to increase the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system, by providing them with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through learning opportunities and research valued by students, parents and communities and to maintain an accountability system that measures student progress."

The Florida Department of Education serves more than 2.9 million students, 3,674 public schools, 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions, 176,000 K-12 public school teachers, 40,613 FCS faculty and administrators and 340,000 full-time school district staff throughout the state; the department enhances the economic self-sufficiency of Floridians through programs and services geared toward college, workforce education, apprenticeships, job-specific skills and career development. The department manages programs that assist individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or have other disabilities succeed either in school settings or careers – encouraging independence and self-sufficiency.

FDOE provides oversight to 28 locally governed public state colleges and 49 school district technical centers.

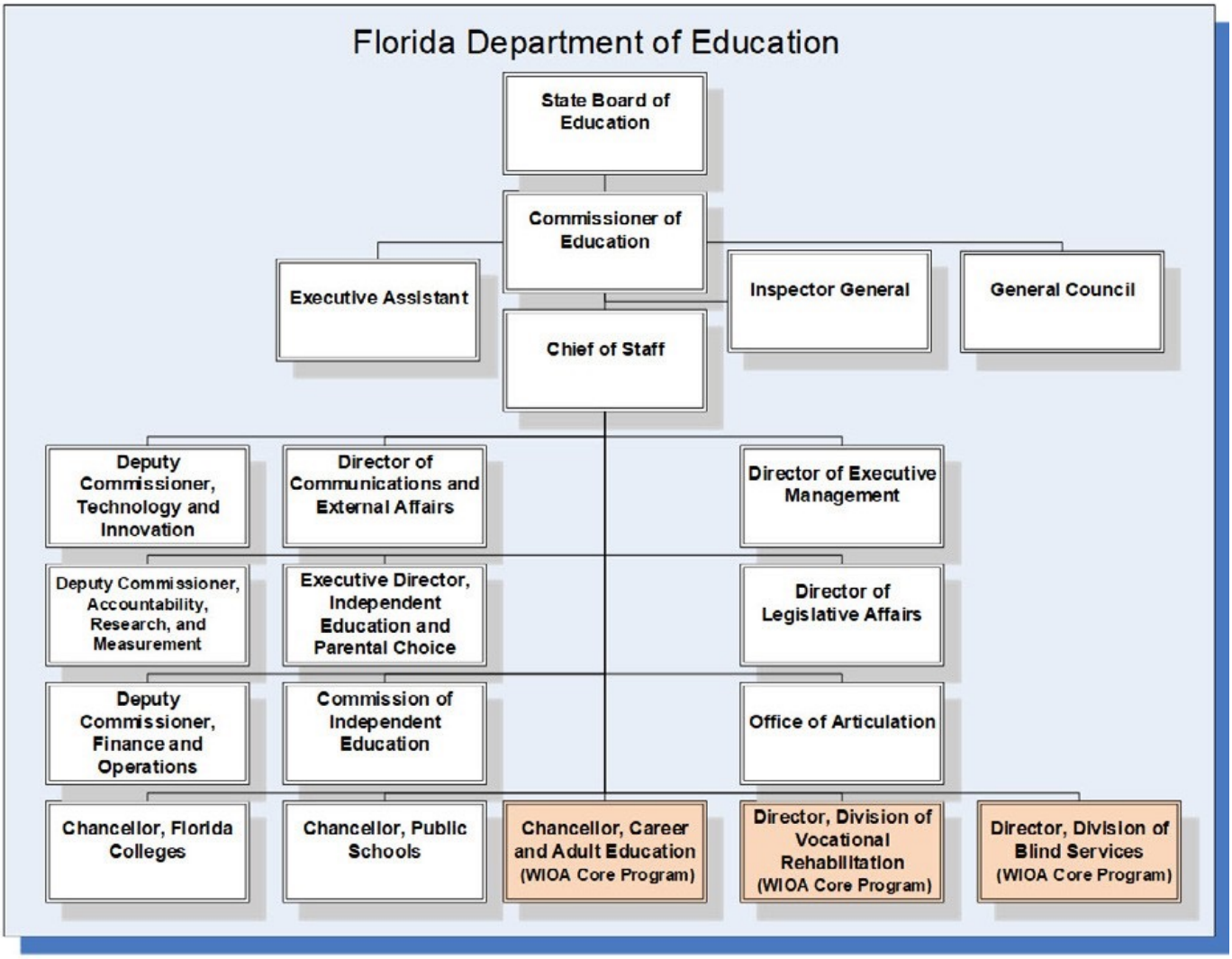
FDOE is currently appropriated 2,123.75 total full-time positions, including 884 positions in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 290 positions in the Division of Blind Services and 77 positions in the Division of Career and Adult Education. The department's annual operating budget for all entities in state fiscal year 2021-22 is approximately $23.3 billion, and $2.8 billion of this amount is related to covid funding.

The FDOE organizational and governance structure includes the State Board of Education which consists of seven members appointed by the Governor to staggered four-year terms, subject to confirmation by the Senate. Except for the State University System, the State Board of Education is the chief implementing and coordinating body of public education in Florida.

The state board focuses on high-level policy decisions and has the authority to adopt rules to implement provisions of federal and state law. General duties include, but are not limited to, adopting education objectives and long-range plans for public education in Florida, exercising general supervision over the department, submitting an annual coordinated PreK-20 education budget and adopting uniform standards of student performance.

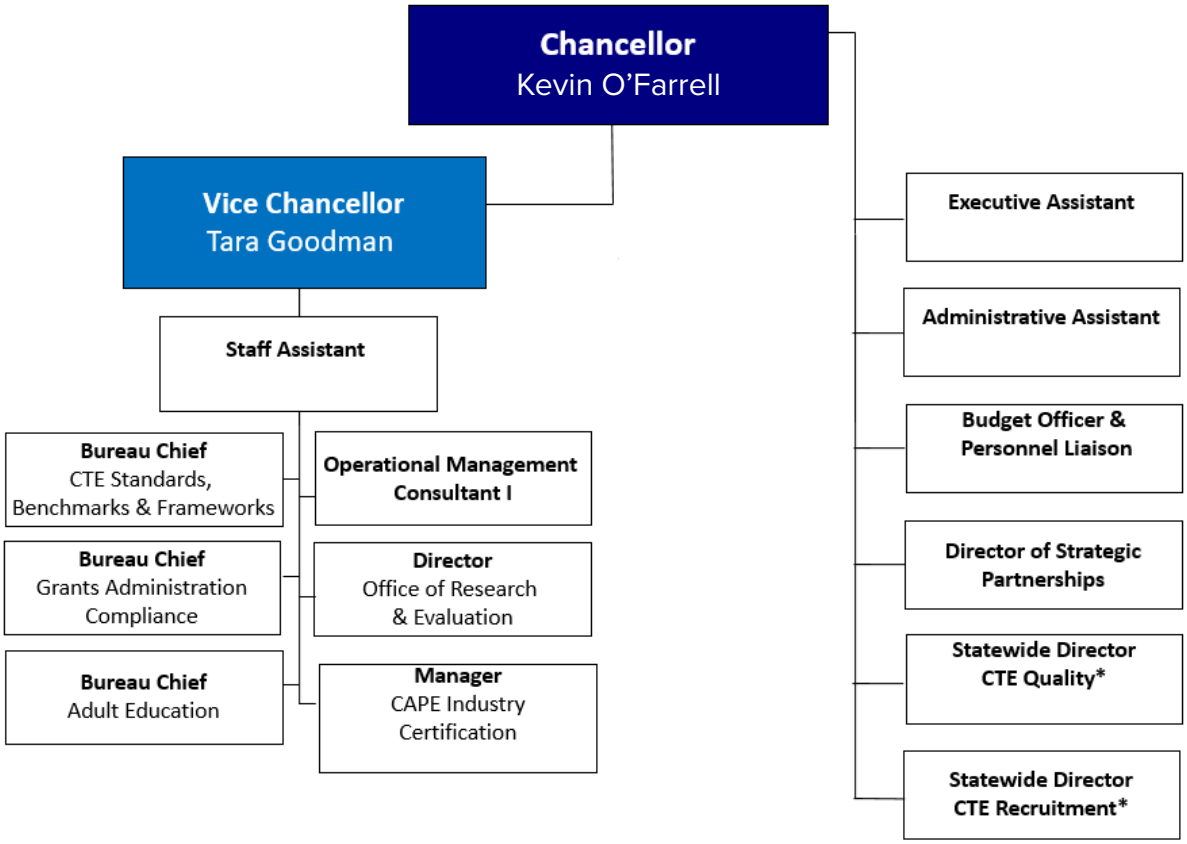
FDOE policies and operations are led by the department's senior leadership team, consisting of the Commissioner of Education, chief of staff, division leaders and directors of support divisions (see organizational chart below). FDOE manages the core WIOA programs for adult and career education, VR and blind services. The senior leadership team develops strategies, designs operational policies and manages the department's business processes. Senior leader meetings are held weekly. Strategy development meetings are conducted quarterly. Strategies are tracked and adjusted as needed. FDOE financial and operational performance is reported on a regularly scheduled basis to the U.S. Department of Education, the Executive Office of the Governor and the Florida Legislature.

Figure 3.06
Florida Department of Education Organizational Chart



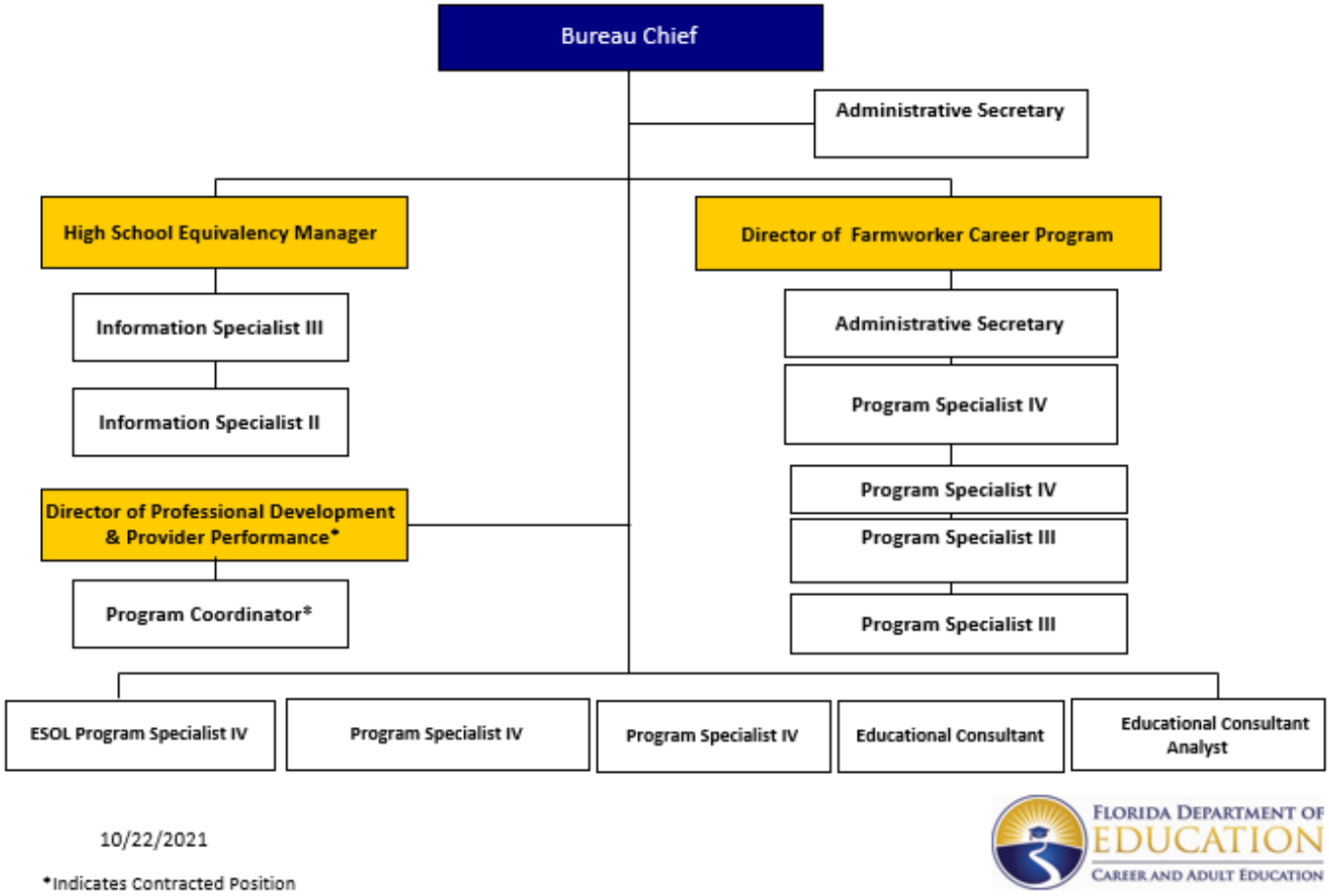
The Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) has oversight over the adult education system implemented in districts, colleges and community-based organizations. The division coordinates the distribution of federal adult education grants. DCAE works closely with local programs and provides guidance on state and federal guidelines, professional development and support in reporting data and technical assistance on program improvement plans.

Figure 3.07
Division of Career and Adult Education Organizational Chart
Bureau of Adult Education



10/22/2021
*Indicates Contracted Position

Figure 3.08
Division of Career and Adult Education
Bureau of Adult Education
Organizational Chart



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

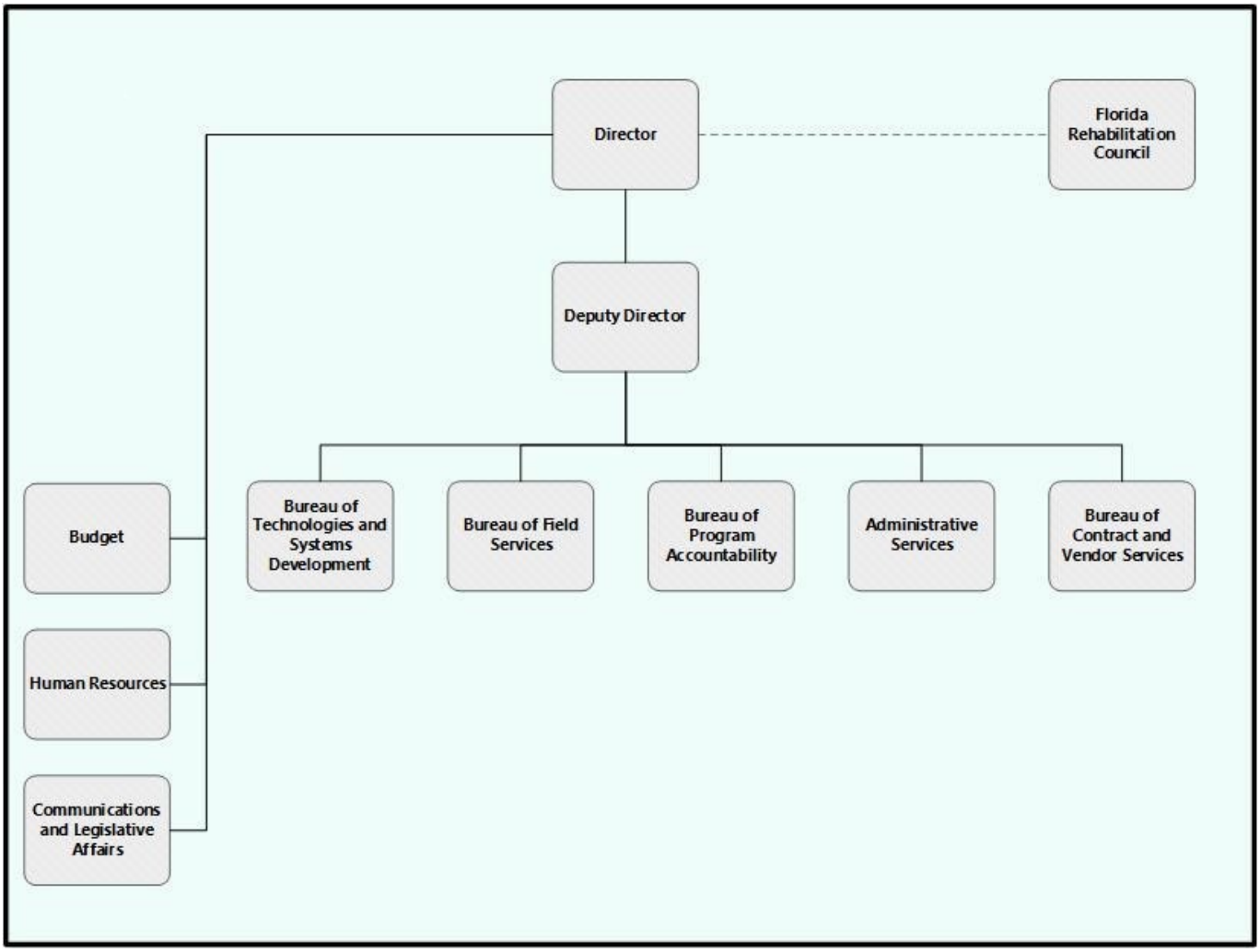
The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is federally established under the Rehabilitation Act, as Amended (1998) and reauthorized as a core program of WIOA (2014). In Florida, VR is a division of the Florida Department of Education. VR comprises a headquarters office, seven area offices and 96-unit offices located throughout Florida where customers receive direct services. The VR program is funded as a federal-state partnership, in which 21.3 percent of state general revenue matches a 78.7 percent

federal grant. Most programmatic oversight and governance are established in the federal laws and code of federal regulations. Florida state laws for VR are in Chapter 413, Florida Statutes. VR provides annual planning updates and annual/quarterly performance and financial reports to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) which conducts regulatory and programmatic monitoring and oversight activities approximately every four years.

WIOA retains the presence of a state rehabilitation council, known as the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC). Council members are volunteers appointed by the Governor and represent a variety of perspectives

from the disability community. The council is not a governance board but is required by federal law to review, analyze and advise VR. Key collaborative activities with the council include input and recommendations for the VR services portion of the state plan, key programmatic policies, assessing VR customer satisfaction and the progress and outcomes of administrative hearings for VR customers. VR's organizational structure is represented in Figure 3.09.

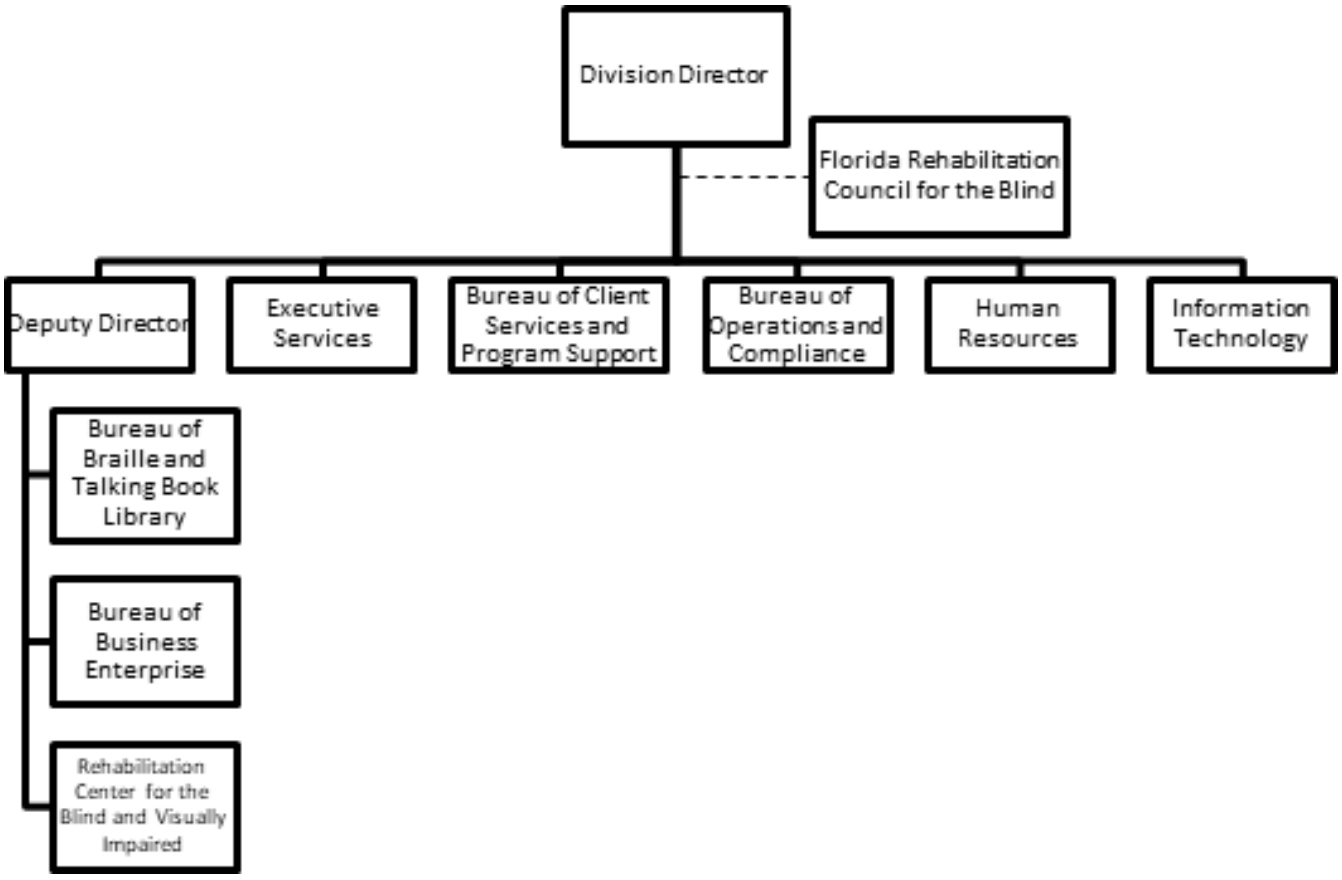
Figure 3.09
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Organizational Chart



Division of Blind Services

The Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) employment program is a federally established program under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended (1998), and reauthorized as a core program of WIOA (2014). The FDBS is part of the Florida Department of Education and serves blind and visually impaired Floridians. Fifteen district offices and the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind administer and coordinate services. Utilizing funds procured through a combination of state, federal, and community funding, the Division provides services to customers based on individual needs in partnership with community rehabilitation providers and other local partners.

Figure 3.10 Division of Blind Services Organizational Chart



(B) State Board

(i) Membership Roster

Florida's state workforce development board, known as the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, is made up of 31 members. The state board is chaired by the Governor. When the Governor is unable to participate, a business representative, approved by the Board, serves as Chair. Currently, Stephanie Smith serves as the Chair on behalf of Governor DeSantis. Board membership includes the Governor, 16 business representatives, six (6) workforce representatives and eight (8) government officials, including core program state representatives, state legislative representatives and chief elected officials.

Figure 3.11
CareerSource Florida Board of Directors Membership Roster
as of September 2022

	Category	Business / Agency	First Name	Last Name	Title
Government & Elected Officials					
1	Governor	State of Florida	Ron	DeSantis	Governor
2	State Legislature Representative, Chief Elected Official	Florida Senate	Ben	Albritton	Senator
3	State Legislature Representative, Chief Elected Official	Florida House of Representatives	Lauren	Melo	Representative
4	Elected Official, City	City of Apopka	Bryan	Nelson	Mayor
5	Elected Official, County	Okaloosa County	Melvin	Ponder	Commissioner
6	Core Program State Official	Department of Economic Opportunity			
		Department of Economic Opportunity Designee			
7	Core Program State Official	Department of Education	Manny	Diaz	Commissioner
		Department of Education Designee	Henry	Mack	Sr. Chancellor
8	Core Program State Official	Department of Education, Division of Blind Services	Robert	Doyle	Director
9	Core Program State Official	Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Brent	McNeal	Director
10	Core Program State Official	Department of Education, Division of Career, Technical and Adult Education	Kevin	O'Farrell	Chancellor
11	Core Program State Official	Department of Children and Families	Shevaun	Harris	Secretary

Business Representatives					
12	Business	TECO Energy	Stephanie	Smith	Vice President, State and Regional Affairs
13	Business	Booz Allen Hamilton	John	Adams	Lead Associate
14	Business	Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc	Abraham	Alangaden	Senior Project Portfolio Manager
15	Business	Band, Gates, and Dramis Attorneys at Law	Erik	Arroyo	Attorney, Mayor of Sarasota
16	Business	PGT Innovations	Bayne	Beecher	Senior Manager of Supply Chain
17	Business	ADT Security Services	Holly	Borgmann	Vice President, Government Affairs
18	Business	Finfrock DMC Belle Glade	Kiley	Damone	Culture and Community Specialist
19	Business	NextEra Energy Resources	Sophia	Eccleston	Director of Origination
20	Business	Autobahn Indoor Speedway	Bill	Johnson	Owner
21	Business	HCA Healthcare	Allison	Kinney	VP, State Government Affairs
22	Business	Allstate Insurance Company	Kevin	McDonald	Agency Owner
23	Business	Buena Vista Consultants	Patsy	Sanchez	Principal
24	Business	AAR Corporation	Brian	Sartain	Senior Vice President of Aerospace Repair
25	Business	Focus School Software	Andrew	Schmadeke	Chief Executive Officer
26	Business	The Boeing Company	Emmanuel	Tormes	Senior Manager of Government Operations
27	Business	Treasure Coast Business Summit and All Things Treasure Coast	Dana	Trabulsey	Co-Chief Executive Officer

Workforce					
28	Youth Representative	Junior Achievement of South Florida	Laurie	Sallarulo	President and Chief Executive Officer
29	Youth Representative	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice	Eric	Hall	Secretary
30	Labor Organization / Apprenticeship Representative	Miller Electric Company	Timothy	Hinson	Director of Workforce Development
31	Veteran's Representative	Veterans Florida	Joe	Marino	Executive Director
32	Community Based Service	Community Foundation of Broward	Jennifer	O'Flannery Anderson	President and CEO
33	Labor Organization Representative	Florida Professional Firefighters	Meredith	Brock Stanfield	Legislative Policy Director
34	Higher Education Representative	Florida Institute of Technology	Robert	Salonen	Director of Government Affairs and Strategic Partnerships
35	Labor Organization	Armstrong Roofing, Inc.	Les	Sims	Vice President

	Category	Business / Agency	First Name	Last Name	Title
Government & Elected Officials					
1	State Legislature Representative, Chief Elected Official	State of Florida	Ron	DeSantis	Governor
2	State Legislature Representative, Chief Elected Official	Florida Senate	Ben	Albritton	Senator
3	State Legislature Representative, Chief Elected Official	Florida House of Representatives	Lauren	Melo	Representative
4	Chief Elected Official	Nelson Insurance Service - Mayor of Apopka	Bryan	Nelson	Mayor, Apopka
5	County Elected Official	Business Empowered, Inc. and Emerald Coast Association of Realtors	Melvin	Ponder	Chief Executive Officer, Okaloosa County Commissioner and Government Affairs Director
6	Core Program State Official	Department of Economic Opportunity			
		Department of Economic Opportunity Designee			
7	Core Program State Official	Dept. of Education	Manny	Diaz	Commissioner
		Dept. of Education Designee	Henry	Mack	Sr. Chancellor
8	Core Program State Official	Dept. of Education, Division of Blind Services	Robert	Doyle	Director
9	Core Program State Official	Dept. of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Brent	McNeal	Director
10	Core Program State Official	Dept. of Education, Division of Adult & Career Education	Kevin	O'Farrell	Chancellor
11	Core Program State Official	Department of Children and Families	Shevaun	Harris	Secretary
Business Representatives					
12	Business	TECO Energy	Stephanie	Smith	Vice President, State and Regional Affairs
13	Business	Community Foundation of Broward	Jennifer	O'Flannery-Anderson	President and CEO
14	Business	Focus School Software	Andrew	Schmadeke	Chief Executive Officer
15	Business	ADT Security Services	Holly	Borgmann	Vice President of Government Affairs

16	Business	Florida Power and Light	Sophia	Eccleston	Senior External Affairs Manager
17	Business	HCA Healthcare	Allison	Kinney	VP, State Government Affairs
18	Business	Booz Allen Hamilton	John	Adams	Director of Technical Operations
19	Business	Allstate Insurance Company	Kevin	McDonald	Agency Owner
20	Business	The Boeing Company	Emmanuel	Tormes	Senior Manager of Government Operations
21	Business	Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc	Abraham	Alangaden	Senior Project Portfolio Manager
22	Business	Band, Gates, and Dramis Attorneys at Law	Abraham	Alangaden	Senior Project Portfolio Manager
23	Business	PGT Innovations	Bayne	Beecher	Senior Manager of Supply Chain
24	Business	AAR Corporation	Brian	Sartain	Senior Vice President of Aerospace Repair
25	Business	Treasure Coast Business Summit and All Things Treasure Coast	Dana	Trabulsey	Co-Chief Executive Officer
26	Business	Finfrock DMC Belle Glade	Kiley	Damone	Culture and Community Specialist
27	Business	Autobahn Indoor Speedway	Bill	Johnson	Owner
28	Business	Buena Vista Consultants	Patsy	Sanchez	Principal
Workforce					
29	Workforce Representative	Florida Institute of Technology	Robert	Salonen	Director of Government Affairs and Strategic Partnerships
30	Workforce Representative	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice	Eric	Hall	Secretary
31	Labor Organization Representative	Florida Professional Firefighters and Paramedics	Meredith	Stanfield	Legislative Policy Director
32	Labor Organization	Miller Electric Company	Timothy	Hinson	Director of Workforce Development
33	Labor Organization	Armstrong Roofing, Inc.	Les	Sims	Vice President
34	Community-Based Service Representative	Junior Achievement of South Florida	Laurie	Callarulo	President and Chief Executive Officer
35	Workforce/Community Based Organization	Veterans Florida	Joe	Marino	Executive Director

(ii) Board Activities

CareerSource Florida's Board of Directors is statutorily required to meet either in person or by teleconference four times a year. CareerSource Florida councils meet separately, in person or by teleconference, as scheduled and/or at the request of the Council Chairman.

These meetings provide opportunities for the Board of Directors to address issues impacting the state network, guide and create strategic policy, obtain information about performance and oversee funding initiatives.

By law, CareerSource Florida is the statewide Workforce Investment Board charged with policy setting and oversight of the workforce system. Section 445.004, Florida Statutes, defines CareerSource Florida's purpose as designing and implementing strategies that help Floridians enter, remain in and advance in the workplace. Information about the role of each council and the executive committee is available, along with board and council meeting schedules and materials, on the CareerSource Florida website.

(4) Assessment of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

(A) Assessment of Core Programs

Core programs are assessed each year based upon actual performance relative to federally required negotiated levels of performance at the state and local areas. Using the Statistical Adjustment Model, negotiations are conducted with each LWDB annually.

Each quarter, performance is evaluated and, if necessary, technical assistance provided in areas of concern. Periodic training sessions are provided as necessary to identify and replicate innovative practices and engage in continuous improvement.

DEO's Programmatic Monitoring Unit conducts annual participant file reviews and monitoring of the WIOA Adult, Youth, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, JVSG, TAA, DWG and RESEA programs in each of the 24 LWDBs. These reviews ensure the LWDBs are adhering to federal and state program requirements and providing appropriate services. A formal written monitoring report identifying best practices, areas of concern and findings resulting from the review is generated upon completion of each review. In addition to the annual programmatic monitoring, the TAA program data is validated for the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) on a quarterly basis through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Data Integrity (TAADI) tool.

For the JVSG program, LWDBs are provided technical assistance through state-level desk reviews of JVSG participant files monitored by the DEO State Veterans' Program Unit.

DEO offers in-person or remote technical assistance to LWDBs to mitigate identified program deficiencies and ensure the delivery of high-quality services that produce positive outcomes and meet the needs of program participants.

(B) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

Florida's WIOA core program partners worked through a WIOA Interagency Measurement and Performance Reporting Workgroup to identify and compare federal WIOA measurement and reporting requirements with current federal performance measures and reporting requirements. The workgroup developed a high-level proposal regarding collection, management and reporting of performance data. CareerSource Florida and DEO participate in the workgroup, providing analyses of existing measures with comparisons of WIOA indicators of performance.

Information technology data collection and reporting systems within each core partner are examined to ensure an integrated systems approach for statewide data collection, reporting and validation. The measurement and performance reporting workgroup designed a reporting flow process identifying how data are collected, compiled, integrated, evaluated and reported to USDOL and USDOE. This process reflects statutory requirements of individual programs and business requirements governing the collection and submittal of performance data. The group continues collaborative efforts, currently reviewing requirements for the sharing of data across core programs for the purposes of federal reporting. This recently resulted in a decision to evaluate the efficacy of adopting a data-hub approach designed to establish universal registrations and further integrate job-seeker referrals across WIOA core programs.

Performance assessments are conducted on a quarterly and annual basis through the core partners' submission of data to FETPIP for data validation and compliance with WIOA requirements and subsequent reporting to USDOL and USDOE. DEO conducts statewide workforce performance assessments and works closely with core partners to enhance data collection and reporting.

Performance reports are routinely provided to the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors and to LWDBs.

The effectiveness of partner programs in career centers are measured by their ability to meet or exceed their agency's and/or federal entity's established goals or targets. Partner program effectiveness is also measured at the local level by the local board ensuring any responsibilities, goals and/or targets that are outlined in MOUs between the local boards and partner organizations are being fulfilled as required.

(C) Previous Assessment Results

Department of Economic Opportunity
DEO continuously conducts data analysis of workforce system performance within the state's WIOA primary indicators of performance. This analysis is used in annual presentations to each local workforce development board to show how each LWDB is performing against its locally negotiated targets for each measure.

Accountability and Continuous Improvement
Florida workforce law expressly requires increased accountability of the workforce system for the state, localities and training providers. Florida has several valuable methods for continually monitoring performance as both real-time management tools and tools for continuous improvement.

Levels of Service
Total participants served during Program Year 2020-21 decreased by 4.3 percent for Adult participants. Dislocated Workers participants served increased by 15.0 percent and Youth participants served decreased by 2.4 percent. The chart below presents the total number of participants served and exiters leaving the WIOA program during Program Year 2020-21.

Florida has experienced a decrease in the total participants served since the pandemic. At the direction of the state board, the Department of Economic Opportunity is conducting further analysis on levels of service including enrollment history pre-pandemic versus current enrollment trends during Florida's economic recovery; identifying opportunities for increased services to youth, adults with no HS diploma; and aligning unemployment services with WIOA program services.

Figure 3.12
2020-2021 WIOA Participants/Exiters

WIOA Program	Total Participants Served	Total Exiters
Adults	28,694	5,154
Dislocated Workers*	5,348	1,191
Youth	12,372	2,716

DW numbers include DW grants, which served 3,211 participants and had 1,209 exiters.

Figure 3.13
2019-2020 WIOA Participants/Exiters

WIOA Program	Total Participants Served	Total Exiters
Adults	29,988	8,192
Dislocated Workers*	4,649	1,524
Youth	12,671	3,298

DW numbers include DW grants, which served 2,213 participants and had 881 exiters.

WIOA Performance Measures

Data on core measures and primary indicators of performance are collected from Florida's Management Information System (MIS), Reemployment Assistance (RA) Wage Records, and the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) beginning January 2020. The MIS gathers exit information on participants and covers the real-time data elements referenced above. RA Wage Records contain information such as wages used to determine retention information after exit. The SWIS is a database consisting of wage and employment records from other states. SWIS records supplement Florida's RA data and provides a more comprehensive picture of participant outcomes.

The chart below illustrates Florida's negotiated rate for each of the required primary indicators of performance along with the actual statewide outcomes achieved. Pursuant to federal policy, states achieving at least 90 percent of the negotiated goal are considered to have met the goal. The 90 percent criterion is shown in parentheses. Florida met all performance targets for Program Year 2020-2021.

Figure 3.14
State WIOA Statewide Primary Indicators of Performance Program Year 2020-2021

Wioa Indicators Of Performance	Negotiated Goal (90% Of Goal)	Actual Performance	Difference Compared to 90% of Goal
Adult Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	85.5% (76.9%)	84.5%	+ 7.6%
Adult Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	84.0% (75.6%)	82.8%	+ 7.2%
Adult Median Wage 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$7,000 ($6,300)	$8,381	+ $2,081
Adult Credential Attainment Rate	68.0% (61.2%)	78.5%	+ 17.3%
Adult Measurable Skills Gains	47.0% (42.3%)	80.7%	+38.4%
DW Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	85.0% (76.5%)	83.9%	+ 7.4%
DW Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	79.0% (71.1%)	76.6%	+ 5.5%
DW Median Wage 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$7,000 ($6,300)	$10,666	+ $4,366
DW Credential Attainment Rate	70.0% (63.0%)	82.5%	+ 19.5%
DW Measurable Skills Gains	47.0% (42.3%)	83.2%	+40.9%
Youth Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	79.0% (71.1%)	79.5%	+ 8.4%
Youth Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	73.0% (65.7%)	76.6%	+ 10.9%
Youth Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$3,200 ($2,800)	$3,900	+$1.100
Youth Credential Attainment Rate	76.5% (68.9%)	80.5%	+11.7%
Youth Measurable Skills Gains	45.5% (40.9%)	53.0%	+12.1%
AEFLA Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	28.3% (25.47%)	24.0%	-1.47%
AEFLA Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	26.0% (23.4%)	24.1%	-0.7%
AEFLA Median Wage 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$4395 ($3955)	$4617	+$662
AEFLA Credential Attainment Rate	10.6% (9.5%)	23.2%	+13.7%
AEFLA Measurable Skills Gains - ABE	25.0% (22.5%)	25.7%	+3.2%
AEFLA Measurable Skills Gains - ESOL	26.6% (23.9%)	25.1%	+1.2%

Local Performance

Expected levels of performance or goals were agreed upon for each LWDB. The chart below summarizes outcomes based on these goals and the previous federal 90 percent criterion.

Figure 3.15
Local Workforce Development Board WIOA Performance Program Year 2020-21

Wioa Indicators of Performance	State Goal	# Of LWDBS Achieving Goal	% Of LWDBS Achieving Goal
Adult Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	85.5%	22 of 24	91.7%
Adult Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	84.0%	19 of 24	79.2%
Adult Median Wage 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$7,000	22 of 24	91.7%
Adult Credential Attainment Rate	68.0%	19 of 24	79.2%
Adult Measurable Skills Gains	47.0%	23 of 24	95.8%
Dislocated Worker Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	85.0%	13 of 24	91.7%
Dislocated Worker Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	79.0%	14 of 24	58.3%
Dislocated Worker Median Wage 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$7,000	18 of 24	75.0%
Dislocated Worker Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%	21 of 24	87.5%
Dislocated Worker Measurable Skills Gains	47.0%	23 of 24	95.8%
Youth Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	79.0%	24 of 24	100.0%
Youth Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	73.0%	23 of 24	95.8%
Youth Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$3,200	22 of 24	91.7%
Youth Credential Attainment Rate	76.5%	19 of 24	79.2%
Youth Measurable Skills Gains	45.5%	17 of 24	70.8%

Performance Indicators: Section 116 of WIOA identifies indicators of performance for the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs. These measures for FY 2020-2021 are below:

Figure 3.16

Adult Measures	PY 2020-2021 Goals
Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	85.5%
Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	84.0%
Median Wage 2nd Quarter After Exit	$7,000
Credential Attainment Rate	68.0%
Measurable Skills Gains	47.0%
Dislocated Worker Measures	
Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	85.0%
Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	79.0%
Median Wage 2nd Quarter After Exit	$7,000
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%
Measurable Skills Gains	47.0%
Youth Measures	
Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	79.0%
Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	73.0%
Youth Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. After Exit	$3,200
Credential Attainment Rate	76.5%
Measurable Skills Gains	45.5%
Wagner-Peyser Measures	
Employed 2nd Qtr. After Exit	65.0%
Employed 4th Qtr. After Exit	64.2%
Median Wage 2nd Quarter After Exit	$5,000

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Florida integrated customer satisfaction surveys are a component of its workforce management system, Employ Florida. Customer satisfaction survey results are invaluable to the state as they identify and improve on strategies implemented to better serve workforce services customers.

DEO uses a customer service survey to assess the experience of job seekers and businesses in using the state's workforce management information system, Employ Florida. Integrated in the Employ Florida system, the survey consists of seven questions. During the 2020-2021 program year, 7,740 surveys were completed. Of those completing the survey, 84% were job seekers and 93% sought employment or career planning. Approximately 44% of respondents reported no challenges in finding information on the Employ Florida website.

Approximately 47% of the respondents reported no challenges in understanding information on the system, while roughly 50% of the respondents rated their overall experience as good or excellent.

DEO utilizes these survey results as well as feedback from case managers to identify and implement features that improve the customer experience of Employ Florida. As an example, this program year DEO implemented remote signature functionality. With the new electronic signature functionality, signers no longer have to be physically present in order to sign documents needed for program applications or job searches. Providing an extra level of protection, documents can be sent through the system's message center, by email, or via text message. Individuals can review documents and sign using either a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Documents are encrypted to ensure full security and an audit trail is maintained for each signature on file.

Local Workforce Development Board Performance Reviews
Section 445.007(3), Florida Statutes, requires DEO to assign staff, to meet annually with each LWDB to review performance and certify compliance with state and federal laws.

During PY 2020 - 21, DEO staff presented information on the local board's program and financial performance and compliance. Annual presentations provide a unique opportunity for dialogue with local board members, offering them a complete understanding of how state and federal performance requirements impact their local board's performance outcomes and customer experiences.

DEO holds local boards accountable for program compliance and performance. The guidance provided in Administrative Policy 104 – Sanctions for Local Workforce Development Boards' Failure to Meet Federal and State Standards, provides for consequences to local boards in situations indicating a pattern of low performance, and programmatic and financial deficiencies found during quality assurance monitoring reviews.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation collaborates with partners at the state and local levels to maximize employment services for people with disabilities. VR anticipates that the following projects will have a positive impact on program performance:

- Support employers and community partnerships through the Business Relations program.
- Continue providing Career Counseling/Information and Referral (CCIR) services to individuals participating in subminimum wage employment. Due to the positive response to CCIR services, VR is developing an orientation and follow-up process for CCIR service recipients who expressed interest in VR services.
- Assist customers in making informed choices about employment providers through the use of the Services Provider Choice Directory.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors and expand Individual Placement and Support and to improve success for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Continue to increase provider capacity for Discovery, Customized Employment and CBTAC services.
- Implement additional Project SEARCH sites.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Strengthen data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients to promote self-support.
- Purchase these services when not available from SSA.

The chart below shows VR employment targets and outcomes for FFY 2019-2020 and FFY 2020-2021.

Figure 3.17
Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Federal Performance Indicators and Targets

Federal Performance Indicators and Targets	Actual Performance (FFY 20)	Previous (FFY 19)
Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	-335	+265
Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	38.54%	37.9%
Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	73.35%	96.94%
Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	90.07%	92.56%
Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary)(RSA Target: 52%)	57.75%	55%
Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	47.80%	54.53%
Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	97.95%	94%

Division of Blind Services

The Division of Blind Services commissioned San Diego State University to conduct a needs assessment in 2018. The assessment revealed the following areas of need related to the workforce system:

- Educate employers on the abilities of individuals who are blind or visually impaired
- Retain Employment Rehabilitation Specialists
- Market services to the community and increase public awareness of the organization
- Identify transportation resources to help clients become and/or remain employed
- Provide training on assistive technology at an early age
- Provide soft skills training to youth in transition
- Greater outreach and service to minorities, namely Hispanic and Asian individuals

Based upon the results of the needs assessment, the FDBS developed strategies incorporated and described throughout this plan to address these needs. See Section X(j) for further details.

Adult Education

State targets are negotiated with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) and established for each of the educational functioning levels for ABE, Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and ESOL on an annual basis. The target percentage is based on prior program year performance and a comparison of the state with national averages.

The percentages represent the portion of students who must meet the goal for each educational functioning level. The chart below shows the target and performance for 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

Figure 3.18
Florida Adult Education State Targets
Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education

Measure	2018-19 Target	2018-19 Performance	2019-20 Target	2019-20 Performance	2020-21 Target	2020-21 Performance
ABE Beginning Literacy	43%	26.93%	42%	15.51%	43%	12.28%
ABE Beginning	42%	28.88%	42%	16.46%	43%	19.73%
ABE Low Intermediate	41%	33.83%	42%	25.83%	43%	26.47%
ABE High Intermediate	42%	40.14%	42%	33.38%	43%	32.42%
ASE Low	44%	37.54%	42%	34.25%	43%	44.52%

Figure 3.19
Florida Adult Education State Targets English for Speakers of Other Languages

Measure	2018-19 Target	2018-19 Performance	2019-20 Target	2019-20 Performance	2020-21 Target	2020-21 Performance
ESL Beginning Literacy	44%	46.87%	40%	36.42%	41%	28.19%
ESL Low Beginning	53%	33.61%	40%	30.67%	41%	29.55%
ESL High Beginning	44%	27.51%	40%	25.11%	41%	24.94%
ESL Low Intermediate	41%	25.03%	40%	23.17%	41%	24.71%
ESL High Intermediate	41%	24.16%	40%	23.94%	41%	26.69%
ESL Advanced	28%	12.69%	40%	18.70%	41%	19.60%

(D) Evaluations and Research Projects

Selected research and improvement projects are aligned to strategies in this unified plan and monitored by the core program planning workgroup. To select projects, core program partners use the working group flow discussed in Section IV to recommend areas for analysis or improvements. These projects are presented to and approved by the leadership of the core program partner agencies and coordinated as necessary with the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education.

(5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

(A) State's Methods and Factors Used to Distribute Funds to Local Areas for —

(i) Youth Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Seventy percent of the total regional allocation is based on the required allocation factors of the relative number of unemployed individuals in an area of substantial unemployment, the relative number of unemployed individuals who exceed 6.5 percent of the civilian labor force in that workforce region and the relative number of economically disadvantaged individuals in the workforce region. The state board approved the application of the maximum allowable factor of 30 percent to the adult and youth regional calculations based on the relative excess poverty levels within the 24 local areas. Excess poverty is defined as the number of economically disadvantaged individuals (adult or youth) in excess of 1.25 percent of the civilian labor force within the workforce region.

(iii) Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Please see response for section III (5)(A)(i).

(iv) Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned

Florida uses the following four factors (with relative weight of each factor noted) in determining allocation percentages used to distribute Dislocated Worker funding to the 24 LWDBs:

Figure 3.20
Distribution of Dislocated Worker Funding Percentages

Factor	Weight
12-month average of reemployment assistance claimants	20%
12-month average of unemployed individuals	25%
Mass Layoff Statistics (number of initial claims)	25%
Long-Term Unemployed (12-month average unemployment compensation Final Payments)	30%

Note: All factors are based on the most recent calendar year data available.

For each of these four factors, relative percentages are calculated for each LWDB, weights are then applied, and the resulting amounts are combined to determine the full 100 percent factor for each local workforce development board.

The factors of declining industries data and farmer-rancher economic hardship are given a zero weighting in the WIOA dislocated worker sub-state allocation formula.

- Declining industries data – Absent a recession, Florida has only one declining industry in recent times with a number of workers that is insignificant when compared to the total number in the state workforce.
- Farmer-rancher economic hardship – There is a lack of public use data sources with sufficient geographic detail to adequately serve the requirements of an allocation formula.

Funds not distributed using these formula factors are reserved at the state level for discretionary awards to address specific dislocation events and operate the state's rapid response unit.

(B) For Title II:

(i) Awarding multi-year grants on contracts to eligible providers

In accordance with Section 231 under Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of WIOA, the DCAE provided funding to eligible local entities to provide adult education services through a competitive process for 2021-2022 with a continuation year to occur in 2022-2023. This includes grant projects funded under Section 225 – Corrections and Other Institutionalized.

A competitive bidding process was conducted in the summer of 2021. DCAE identified, assessed and awarded multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state. An eligible provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities that may include a/an:

- Local education agency;
- Community-based or faith-based organization;
- Volunteer literacy organization;
- Institution of higher education;
- Public or private nonprofit agency;
- Public library;
- Public housing authority;
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services;
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above; and
- Partnerships between an employer and an entity described above.

In the grant and contract awarding process, the required 13 considerations identified in Section 231 are included in the evaluation and selection process. Other factors considered include: the ability of the eligible provider to meet the literacy needs of the area, the ability to comply with WIOA expectations, the demonstrated and past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals and the overall qualifications and expertise of the provider's personnel.

As part of the grant application awarding process, Florida incorporated the expansion of integrated education and training services, which provide adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation and occupational cluster for educational and career advancement.

Just as in 2017-2018, Florida utilized data from the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) to determine projected allocations (not less than 82.5%) of federal AEFLA funds for each of Florida's 67 counties. ACS provides the most current data and is a standard dataset used by OCTAE and other state formula grant programs at the U.S. Department of Education. The allocation and distribution of funds are expected to address the educational and training needs of eligible individuals throughout the county, particularly those eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy skills, are English language learners or are individuals with disabilities.

(ii) Direct and equitable access to all eligible providers

DCAE ensures all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants and contracts. The Request for Proposal (RFP) announcement, for the 2021-2022 competition, was distributed through various communication outlets including the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) communication system, regional and local media outlets, a formal press release, and an announcement on the FDOE website and major statewide educational publications to ensure all prospective eligible providers had access to the same standardized information.

An annual webinar was conducted to review the grant application process and facilitate any questions from prospective eligible providers. Grant application procedures are the same for all eligible providers.

(C) Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

In Florida, VR services are delivered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Blind Services (FDBS), both of which are administratively housed in the Florida Department of Education. Based on a mutual letter of understanding, Florida's federal grant funding for VR services is allocated as follows: 83 percent of grant funding is allocated to VR and 17 percent of grant funding is allocated to FDBS.

(6) Program Data

(A) Data Alignment and Integration

(i) Interoperable Management Information System

Core partner agencies convened a data workgroup to obtain information about the data systems and applications used by each partner and to identify essential actions to comply with data collection and reporting requirements for WIOA. These meetings revealed most state systems use the same database platforms, or platforms between partner agencies are highly extensible and interoperable.

Florida will use a federated model with key systems interacting in intervals of real-time daily, monthly and quarterly. This allows minimal interruption of the data collection, management and reporting practices of each of the core and sub-entities involved within the partner agencies.

(ii) State's Plans to Integrate Data Systems

Streamlined intake takes place at the LWDB level instead of the system level. When intake data are captured by any of the core partner agencies and are necessary for the reporting and performance of other partner programs, these agencies contribute to a central repository system either in real-time or by system interface. Florida is also currently exploring the efficacy of using a hub system to further integrate across WIOA core programs through universal intake and referral of job seekers

Employ Florida provides an integrated online labor exchange and case management system for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, JVSG, TAA and RESEA programs through one system. Employ Florida also interfaces with Florida's Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits management information system for Unemployment Insurance program benefits.

Employ Florida optimizes the use of staff time by determining eligibility of multiple programs through a single form that collects all required data fields. Data transfers can be facilitated from local areas, providing flexibility and reporting for local agencies and providers using independent systems. In addition, Employ Florida offers integrated report design, distribution methods and management features that meet the PIRL requirements.

Florida is in the process of expanding the integration of the Employ Florida system to include SNAP E&T and TANF and implement the transition of the OSST system to the new Employ Florida system which establishes an even more integrated and seamless system for data collection and program management.

The Employ Florida system allows for effective evaluation and monitoring of each LWDB's program performance by DEO. Electronic, paperless participant case files created in the Employ Florida system allow for remote monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, career center program staff have access to the Employ Florida Document Management system that provides the ability to scan, upload and attach electronic files. Employ Florida ensures consistency across LWDBs throughout the state by using identical criteria for establishing program eligibility and participation. The system effectively tracks participants and their activities across workforce programs, efficiently organizing the information and data required for consistent monitoring and evaluation of Title I and III programs.

DEO and the Florida Department of Education developed and signed a data-sharing agreement thatallows for the exchange of data for federal funded programs under WIOA. A process has been put in place which allows for the exchange of PIRL files between both agencies. In addition to the PIRL files, DOE provides DEO the necessary data required for the Employer Indicators. DEO then combines the data and submits the indicators for both agencies.

The REACH Act requires DEO, in collaboration with DOE and DCF, to spearhead a consumer-first workforce system that allows for common intake across partners and integrated case management. The DEO commissioned a feasibility study in Summer of 2021 and the results of this study will guide future work toward integration of systems.

(iii) Aligning Technology and Data Systems Across Mandatory One-Stop Partner Programs

The state uses technology to assist with data collection across the mandatory one-stop career center partner programs. Most mandatory program data are captured and shared extensively between three systems using a strong federated architecture. All participants have access to the labor exchange and labor market information systems. By 2022, the state expects to have migrated the SNAP E&T and TANF case management and data system (OSST) into the labor market exchange and case management system (Employ Florida) to streamline services through one integrated system at local career centers. The state is further exploring integration through the consumer-first workforce system called for in the REACH Act.

(iv) State's Plans to Develop and Produce Reports Required Under WIOA Section 116

The state's current infrastructure and proposed infrastructure is positioned to meet WIOA reporting requirements. Through collaboration with the vendor of Florida's online job-matching portal, necessary data files are configured on a quarterly basis for federal reporting and submitted through the Enterprise Data Reporting Validation System. Prior to submission, files are analyzed for data consistency and vetted using internal queries and tracking reports.

All reports are approved by DEO for certification and reviewed by CareerSource Florida staff. Florida core partners continue to work toward improving the process via modified data sharing mechanisms and reporting protocols.

There are multiple state agencies in Florida that have administrative responsibility for the WIOA core programs. These include both the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and the Florida Department of Education. While each of these entities maintains separate participant and financial information systems, the agencies continue to work collaboratively to integrate data across Florida's workforce development system.

Employ Florida is based on federal requirements to collect the data for reporting for Title I and III programs. Each week, the PIRL files are produced. On a bi-monthly basis, DEO reviews the data in the files and checks for data issues. A list of issues or missing data is sent to the respective LWDB Regional Security Officer to be corrected in Employ Florida. In addition to reviewing the data, the files are uploaded into the Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) edit checks. This process is performed on a monthly basis throughout the program year.

DEO submits the Employer Indicators for both DOE and DEO to WIPS. DOE provides the required information to DEO which is combined with DEO's data and then submitted through WIPS. In addition to federal reporting, DEO provides participant and exiter data from Employ Florida to the Florida Department of Education. This information is used to develop and produce the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) Annual Outcomes Report.

(B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success

Driven by the transparency and accountability priorities of the CareerSource Florida Board, theContinuous Improvement Performance Initiative assesses quarterly achievement and drives systemic change to help Florida become a global leader for talent. The initiative encourages the 24 LWDBs to focus on staff-assisted, high-quality services for Florida businesses in targeted sectors identified the local plans. The initiative also places a focus on accelerated job placement and high-quality training services to job seekers with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA.

The Continuous Improvement Performance Initiative website can be viewed on CareerSource Florida's website.

CareerSource Florida and DEO offer ongoing technical assistance through webinars, one-on-one telephone consultations and in-person presentations, including trainings at the Florida Workforce Professional Development Summit.

Additional information is collected through CareerSource Florida sector initiatives, local board pilot projects and statewide higher education data to support market-informed decision-making and enable statewide policy development.

(C) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

Pursuant to Section 1008.39, Florida Statutes, FETPIP is mandated to provide outcome reporting on workforce and education programs in Florida. The primary mechanism employed by FETPIP is UI and State Wage Interchange System (SWIS). All core partners report participant data to FETPIP under WIOA. Florida UI wage information will be made available, as the law allows, to the core partners for employment and wage-related outcome identification for federal performance standards. With the use of wage record data, performance accountability and program evaluations for all core programs can be conducted in a similar manner.

(D) Privacy Safeguards

Core partners agree to follow all applicable federal, state and local laws pertaining to confidential information. Each partner ensures the collection and use of information containing personally identifiable information is limited to purposes that support its programs and activities.

Florida is aware that a key element of success to utilizing data across agencies for either improved customer service or improved measurement and tracking of outcomes is ensuring the integrity of all data and ensuring confidential data is treated as such. This is accomplished with various technical safeguards and ensuring personnel handling this data are properly trained in all relevant regulations and the fundamentals of handling personal and confidential data. Technical safeguards may include:

- Approved processes that limit access to the data to only those personnel who require access to carry out their daily job functions;
- Network security, monitoring, firewalls, etc. to prevent unauthorized access to data from entities outside of state government;
- Encryption technology; and
- Secure data transport mechanisms.

Data Sharing Agreements are used when confidential information is shared with another entity. All partners that will provide and share data in collaboration efforts will enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and/or a data sharing agreement to ensure security of sensitive information. All partners expressly agree to abide by all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding confidential information and to adhere to the same standards of confidentiality as state employees.

Florida's Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs ensure strict adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232g), its implementing regulations (34 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] part 99) to protect the privacy of students' education records and afford eligible students certain rights to inspect and review education records, to seek to amend these records and to consent to the disclosure of personal identifiable information (PII) from education records. All funded adult programs must submit signed assurances concerning privacy safeguards and periodic review of such safeguards are part of the Department's compliance monitoring system.

In addition to the safeguards listed, the Division ensures strict adherence to the FDOE Acceptable Use Policy document, and all employees sign a Data Use Agreement that specifically states all confidential information shall be used solely for conducting the work of the Division. Access to confidential client data is strictly limited to employees based on their job function and 'need-to-know' basis in order to perform the functional duties of their position.

All employees, contractors, and agents must complete mandatory security awareness training annually. The required security awareness training advises employees, contractors, and agents of the civil and criminal sanctions for non-compliance to applicable federal and state laws.

The Florida Division of Blind Services follows the policy and procedures detailed in the Florida Department of Education's Computer Security Incident Response policy document that provides the steps required to respond to suspected computer security incidents. These steps include identifying incidents, notifying the designated Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT), and reporting findings to agency management.

Florida is a signatory state for the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS), and the Florida Department of Education (DOE) is an Access PACIA. To limit the parties involved and further bolster customer privacy, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation conducts matching of both Unemployment Insurance (UI) records and educational records through Florida DOE for the purposes of WIOA.

(7) Priority of Service for Veterans

Florida shall ensure priority of service to eligible veterans and covered persons in its program delivery and services that are directly funded, in whole or part, by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) in accordance with all federal guidance letters and notices, including 20 CFR Part 1010, Employment and Training Administration's Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 10-09, and Training and Employment Notice 15-10. Florida ensures the provision of priority of service with the following:

- All career center staff are trained to screen and identify potential covered persons. The question "Have you or a spouse ever served in the U.S. military?" is asked of every individual upon initial visit in the career center
- Signage notifying covered persons to identify are displayed at every intake counter in the career centers

- Veterans and covered persons who register in Employ Florida receive a pop-up message that ensures these newly registered veterans and covered persons are aware of their entitlement to priority of service and the scope and types of services available under priority of service
- Employ Florida notification of priority of service is documented by an automated service code 089
- Staff are trained to inform veterans and covered persons of their entitlement to priority of service and the scope and types of services available under priority of service and manually document this service in Employ Florida with service code 189
- LVER staff are fully integrated into the CareerSource Florida network and provide annual priority of service training to all career center staff.

Key Definitions

- **Covered person** – The regulations adopt and apply this statutory term, which includes eligible spouses.
- Veteran – The regulations specify that the definition for veteran specified at 38 U.S.C. s. 101(2) **applies** across all qualified job training programs for the purpose of priority of service.

The definition includes two key criteria:

- Service in the active military, naval, or air service
- Discharge under conditions other than dishonorable

Veterans and covered persons identified at the point of entry shall be notified of programs and/or services available. Point of entry includes physical locations, such as one-stop career centers, as well as websites and other virtual service delivery resources.

Implementation

LWDBs will ensure their local plan provides clear strategies and policies for providing veterans and covered persons with the highest quality of service at every phase of services offered. Policies shall be implemented to ensure eligible veterans and covered persons are aware of:

- Their entitlement to priority of service
- The full array of programs and services available to them
- Any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and/or services

Priority of Service means the right of eligible veterans and covered persons to take precedence over eligible non-covered persons for the receipt of employment, training and placement services provided under new or existing qualified job training programs. Eligible veterans and covered persons shall receive access to the service or resources before non-covered persons.

If the service or resource is limited, the veteran or covered person shall receive access to the service or resource instead of or before the non- covered person. Services can range from basic functions of the CareerSource Florida network, such as assistance with job search and identification of needed skills, to more customized initiatives, such as creating career pathways with corresponding competency assessments and training opportunities.

Monitoring Priority of Service
DEO, in coordination with the Florida USDOL Director of Veterans Employment and Training (DVET), conducts on-site technical assistance for the LWDBs to review local implementation of priority of service. In accordance with U.S.C. § 4104(f), LWDBs must submit a Veterans Quarterly Manager's Report (VQMR) to DEO each quarter regarding compliance with federal law and regulations with respect to special services and priorities for eligible veterans and eligible persons. The VQMR requires the LWDB to explain, in writing, how they are implementing priority of service at the local level. These reports are monitored by the DEO State Veterans' Program Coordinator. Additionally, DEO ensures LWDBs' compliance with priority of service in accordance with 20 CFR Part 1010 as part of annual programmatic monitoring.

Significant Barriers to Employment
Service delivery starts at the initial point of entry into the career center where the first person the veteran encounters is a non-JVSG staff member trained in all aspects of the career center and services available to the veteran. This staff member conducts an initial assessment using a questionnaire that has been developed in accordance with federal guidance to determine the level and type of service(s) needed. If the staff member determines during the initial assessment that the level of service precludes the need to see a DVOP specialist, the veteran is referred to the next available non-JVSG staff member for assistance. If the eligible veteran, or other eligible person, is deemed to have an SBE and has a need for enhanced services, the covered person is referred to a DVOP specialist for assistance. Upon referral, the DVOP specialist must, at a minimum:

- Conduct an in-depth assessment of individualized needs;
- Develop a documented IEP; and,
- Conduct consistent contacts with the covered person.

(8) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for People with Disabilities

DEO was one of the original recipients of the Department of Labor's Disability Program Navigator (DPN) grant in 2002 and has expanded services to people with disabilities at CareerSource Florida network career centers throughout the state. The DPN grant focused on developing relationships across agency and entity lines to leverage resources and enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The grant was a catalyst to:

- Expand opportunities and increase staff awareness of the variety of assistive technologies and services available
- Provide technical assistance and training on assisting people with varying disabilities
- Ensure career centers were readily accessible.

Local workforce development boards continue expanding employment and training services for people with disabilities. Eighteen of Florida's 24 LWDBs have been approved as Employment Networks (EN) under the Ticket to Work program.

The state and several LWDBs have accessible mobile CareerSource Florida career centers that provide onsite services to people with disabilities. These mobile centers provide additional access to remote job fairs, assist those impacted by mass layoffs and provide access to other employment and training events for people with disabilities.

At the state level, the workforce system increased active participation on boards working to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities such as:

- Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)
- Florida Developmental Disability Council-led Employment First Initiative and its Employment and Transportation Task Force
- Community Services Block Grant Advisory Council
- Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) has representation within the workforce system and several members of the Statewide Strengthening Youth Partnership are entities focusing on providing quality services to people with disabilities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been a partner in the CareerSource Florida network since the inception of WIOA. Many other state and local entities provide resources that help to maximize employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These partners enhance services career centers offer customers and provide support the workforce system cannot.

Non-core partners and the workforce system maximize comprehensive services for job seekers offering the opportunity for self-sufficiency through meaningful employment. The REACH Act added representation for Division of Blind Services in addition to VR to the state board of directors.

As noted previously in this report, VR launched the Abilities Work web portal within the state MIS, Employ Florida. The portal was created in response to recommendations made by the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities. The Abilities Work web portal was developed by DEO in partnership with VR, FDBS, APD, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and stakeholders from around thestate to provide single point of contact for employers who seek to hire individuals with disabilities. The portal provides guidance and information. The portal's help desk is operated by VR staff with specialized knowledge in disability resources who can guide job seekers and employers navigating the employment system. DEO and these partners continue monitoring the web portal and make improvements in response to suggestions from users and staff.

Resources described above provide a strong foundation for accessibility in the CareerSource Florida network service delivery system. To support and strengthen existing resources, DEO's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) conducts regular onsite and desktop reviews of each LWDB's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended, and 29 CFR Parts 32 and 37.

LWDBs are required to conduct self-audits and participant data analysis to annually monitor their own compliance with the ADA. The primary compliance criteria are contained in Florida's Methods of Administration, as required by federal equal opportunity regulations. To obtain meaningful information about the level of service provided to people with disabilities, OCR conducts the following reviews as necessary:

- Staff interviews
- Customer surveys and interviews
- Facility accessibility survey review and assessment
- Review of customer informational materials, including materials in alternative formats and languages other than English
- Review of community contact programs
- Observation of center activities
- Complaint file review
- Discussion of intake and assessment processes, including provisions to serve people with disabilities or who are non-English speaking
- Review of compliance monitoring reports prepared by or on behalf of the LWDB
- Review of program and equipment available

OCR provides ongoing technical assistance to LWDB/career center staff on such topics as reasonable accommodation requests from customers and employees. Based on these technical assistance requests and its reviews of LWDBs' compliance with ADA requirements, OCR provides formal training onsite or on critical topics by webinar.

To support LWDBS in serving individuals with disabilities, DEO will do the following:

- Facilitate quarterly technical assistance calls between DEO, LWDBs, and other presenters. LWDBs should have staff that regularly interact with customers attend at least one call per year in order to maintain knowledge of best practices.
- Create and maintain a list of resources for employers and LWDBs about employing and serving individuals with disabilities. DEO will provide state-level resource information on its website.
- Maintain and disseminate a schedule of upcoming webinars from various disability associations that staff from LWDBs may attend (such as the Jobs Accommodations Network and the National Disability Institute).

In 2013, VR introduced a strategic initiative to ensure accessibility of all agency components including programs, facilities, personnel and hiring practices, online resources, internal and external communications, and technology systems. Strategies are now built into VR operational procedures. Following ADA Title II requirements, FDOE Leasing staff conducts ADA inspections of all new or renewed VR office leases. VR offices inspected and found not in compliance have a 504 Plan which describes accessibility improvements planned for the facility.

VR customers are included in this process when possible. VR employees in every area are required to complete ADA Coordinator certification training and ADA informational training. Hearing loops and other adaptive equipment and/or software is available in VR facilities. Specific applications were developed using custom JAWS script and workflow documentation to meet the needs of users.

The Florida Division of Blind Services has an accessibility team that provides training to staff on creating accessible documents. The team reviews materials and assists other agencies with applying guidelines to ensure their websites are accessible. The Division's IT team created a detailed resource guide for staff, partners, community rehabilitation providers, etc., covering these topics and more in notable detail. The Division has an agreement with to obtain licenses for assistive technology (AT), such as JAWS (computer screen reader) and Zoom Text (screen magnifier and voice over). This allows the Division to provide AT to clients, core partners, and other state agencies.

The FDOE's conducts ADA inspections on new and renewed facilities leased by the Division. Any facility out of compliance receives a 504 plan outlining the accessibility improvements required to acquire or maintain the lease.

Additional VR internal strategies and activities to increase equal access to individuals requesting services are as follows.

- Use a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid information, furniture inspection instructions and a facility security/building access policy at HQ.
- Continue to use interpreters, translators, and VR's online resources, as well as websites of other partners and stakeholders, to reach underserved populations and increase communication with customers.
- Offer expanded access to services and provide materials and program information in English, Spanish and Haitian-Creole for various agencies, employers, churches, community leaders, health clinics and other settings. The Braille and Talking Books Library within the FDBS provides reading materials in Braille and audio format.
- Continue assigning counselors and consultants to serve specialized populations, such as deaf and hard-of-hearing customers, deaf and blind customers and transition students.
- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other career center partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with the intent to include universal design as a separate component of the one-stop career center certification process.

(9) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners

DEO understands the importance of ensuring universal and meaningful access to its programs and services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). Therefore, DEO has an established LEP plan that outlines the strategies for ensuring English language learners obtain meaningful access to federally funded programs and services. DEO has taken the below steps to provide adequate translation services to individuals LEP:

- Entered into a contract for translation services. All DEO employees that may have oral interactions with LEP individuals have been trained to identify a customer's need for translation services and to provide the service in a timely manner and free of charge. No individual is required to provide their own interpreter.
- Taken reasonable steps to publicize the availability of free translation services and has created a special assisted claims filing telephone service for individuals that cannot read or write effectively in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. DEO has posted notice of these services on its website and in Florida's career centers. Additionally, DEO has instructed Florida's 24 LWDBs to distribute the notice to local community organizations serving LEP populations.
- Includes, on every vital document, a "Babel Notice," informing customers in 15 different languages that free translation services are available upon request.
- Made the entire Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits management information system available in Spanish and Haitian Creole.
- Distributed "Language Communication Cards," or "I speak Cards," to the LWDBs. These resources assist employees providing direct services to customers with quickly identifying the need for translation services.
- Employs bilingual staff to assist LEP individuals.

Florida's adult education programs offer adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction for adults to improve written and spoken English skills. This program assists customers in improving academic skills to provide a path to earning a high school credential, entering postsecondary education and improving individual career options. Florida's one-stop career center partners collaborate to provide quality services, resources and referrals to job seekers with limited English-speaking skills. The FDBS pays for interpreter services to assist job seekers with the VR process. Program forms are also available in Spanish.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Florida Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Core Leadership
A WIOA Interagency Implementation Team consists of professional team members from all core programs who meet monthly to discuss each core program's critical issues, challenges, and accomplishments. This includes discussion of program structures, purpose, customer base, and contributions that could improve the statewide system.

The core partners used the WIOA Unified Plan as an ongoing opportunity to review and update coordination with state plan programs. The WIOA Core Leader Team changes are summarized below:

- Expanded membership for the WIOA Core Leader Team and the State Plan Implementation Team beyond leadership to include subject matter experts from core partners to ensure appropriate representation. Specialized personnel with legal or information technology programming experience may be requested for specific meetings. Membership structures were designed to ensure a "thread" of participants throughout the system so key issues may be identified at each level and brought to discussion at the WIOA Core Program Leadership meetings.
- Workgroup updates and relevant WIOA information that impacts the Florida workforce networks are presented at the monthly WIOA Core Leader meetings. The Core Leader Team uses tracking and communication tools to ensure a venue to report progress, identify resource needs, and make recommendations for additional workgroups to implement key components of the state plan.
- Partners including staff from the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Community Services Block Grant Program, Senior Community Services Employment Program, and the Florida College System are invited to monthly meetings. This provides an ongoing opportunity to share information, review best practices, and participate in discussions around planning and implementation.
- With the implementation of the Reimagining Education and Career Help Act, staff from the REACH Office, housed in the Executive Office of the Governor, are invited to monthly meetings to hear reports from WIOA Core Partners and other staff and provide input.

Policy Development Workgroup
Policy development begins with identifying an issue or need for new or revised policy. The CareerSource Florida Board, CareerSource Florida professional team, the Department of Economic Opportunity, WIOA core partners, the Governor, or Legislature may originate issues and needs for evaluation. Changes in federal or state law, regulations, or rules may require developing or updating strategic or administrative policies or workforce guidance.

The Department of Economic Opportunity program areas routinely assess activities, responsibilities, and the external environment to identify the need for administrative policies. The monitoring process may identify the need to update or develop policy. Administrative policies or workforce guidance may be developed in anticipation of a need or in response to a need.

Substantive revisions may affect the intent or objective of the policy and may require a new policy. This may occur as the result of significant changes in federal or state law. Minor revisions do not affect the intent or objective of the policy and are typically classified as policy updates. Revisions may include clarifying points of the initial policy, reorganizing information for a better flow, description, or explanation, making corrections to existing definitions, punctuation, spelling, or agency titles, adding new definitions, or incorporating attachments to aid in policy statements or clarification.

Once a need for new or revised policy or workforce guidance is identified, the Policy Development Workgroup comprising CareerSource Florida Strategic Policy and Performance team members and the DEO Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support receive the policy assignment. The Policy Development Workgroup ensures policy alignment with the key characteristics of the CareerSource Florida Policy Development Framework, formally adopted by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors in June 2021 along with a Statewide Workforce Development Board Policymaking Authority and Delegation Policy.

Additional staff, core or required partners, representatives from LWDBs, and other subject-matter experts may assist the Policy Development Workgroup in various stages of policy development.

Members of the Policy Development Workgroup work together to present policies to the CareerSource Florida Strategic Policy and Performance Council and the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors for action. When policies are approved, CareerSource Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support collaborate to distribute policies, guidance, and other tools to LWDBs and partners.

Workforce Performance and Finance Team Meetings

CareerSource Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity's Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support continually collaborate to align performance and finance activities throughout Florida's workforce system. Performance and finance professional team members from both organizations meet monthly to review the ongoing implementation of CareerSource Florida budget initiatives, statewide and local performance on federal and state metrics, local workforce development board monitoring activities, and technical assistance needs. These meetings complement the ongoing work of team members on several projects and initiatives required under the REACH Act, WIOA, and state statutes.

REACH Act Implementation Meetings

Since the REACH Act went into effect on July 1, a cross-agency leadership group meets weekly to focus on implementation of the legislation. This workgroup consists of agency leaders from the newly established REACH Office, Department of Education's Career and Adult Education and State University System divisions, Department of Children and Families, CareerSource Florida, and the Department of Economic Opportunity. This group identifies and removes barriers to collaboration, leverages resources across agencies, and reviews ongoing implementation efforts.

Joint Planning and Coordination Among Core Programs and Required One-Stop Partner Programs
As described in 20 CFR, Unified and Combined State Plans Under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, §676.135 states that LWDBs must regularly revisit state plan strategies and recalibrate them to respond to the changing economic conditions and workforce needs of the states.

Since the initial Unified State Plan in Spring 2016, regular interagency meetings of the WIOA Core Partner programs addressed aspects of plan implementation. These meetings included leadership and subject matter experts from the Florida Department of Education's Divisions of Career and Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Blind Services, the Florida College System, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and CareerSource Florida. This group revisits state plan strategies and obtains data-driven information about program performance.

Every two years, a workgroup is formed of subject matter experts from the core partners and the Florida College System. This group addresses the federal Information Collection Request (ICR) requirements for the State Plan and creates instructions for local plans. These meetings typically occur before receiving the ICR, training, or guidance. This workgroup identifies opportunities to continuously improve the quality of the plan and the process for managing the plan.

The plan consists of strategic and operational planning elements that define each program's statewide duties and roles relating to the workforce system, and it details a process to integrate all federally mandated and optional partners. The Two-Year Modification (2021-2023) is consistent with the requirements of federal and state law with an emphasis on modernizing and streamlining services, strengthening partnerships to leverage resources, delivering universal access through system integration, promoting increased accountability and enabling local board and private sector leadership toward local flexibility and integration of programs.

Workgroup members collaborate to identify and submit information reflecting changes in the labor market and economic conditions, along with a narrative update on strategic and operational planning elements described in the original unified plan. The workgroup focuses on writing and submitting a plan that describes accomplishments since 2018 and aligns program elements with the state's vision and goals. Plan partners meet regularly and collaborate to complete updates and submit the plan in the WIOA State Plan Portal.

Local Plans
As required by WIOA, LWDBs submit local plans to the state in partnership with the chief local elected official. CareerSource Florida and DEO solicit input from the Department of Education, Division of Career and Adult Education, and the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services regarding the development of requirements that govern the submission of local plans. Subsequent to this collaboration, DEO distributes local planning instructions for local boards to submit their four-year plans and two-year modifications. These instructions provide direction for creating local plans, which serve as four-year action plans to develop, align, and integrate service delivery strategies and support the state's vision and operational goals.

DEO is in the process of codifying the state's policy governing the submission of local plans through an administrative rule, as required by the REACH Act. Once adopted, this administrative rule and procedural guidelines outlined in federal regulations will govern the local plan process going forward.

The rule will ensure that local plans align with the state's unified plan as well as the state's Comprehensive Education, Employment and Training Policy. The local plans will set forth a strategy to utilize all allowable resources to:

- Assist Floridians in securing employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency and reduces the need for public assistance.
- Provide opportunities for Floridians to develop skills intended to meet the present and future needs of employers.
- Ensure that workforce-related programs are responsive to present and future needs of business and industry.
- Prioritize evidence-based, results-driven solutions to improve outcomes for Floridians and Florida businesses.
- Identify barriers to coordinate and align workforce-related programs and develop solutions to remove such barriers.

Local elected officials, local workforce development board members, core program partners, and mandatory one-stop partners are integral to the planning process. Each plan addresses how the LWDB coordinates service delivery with core programs of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Blind Services, and the Division of Career and Adult Education as well as required partners including, but not limited to: TANF, SNAP E&T, adult and community education, SCSEP, CSBG, and Housing and Urban Development, where available.

Under WIOA and consistent with the Uniform Guidance provided by USDOL, LWDBs, with the agreement of the chief elected official, are required to develop and execute Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with required partners on the operation of the one-stop delivery system in the local service delivery area. Each LWDB must include an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) in the MOU with required partners. The IFA details how infrastructure costs for the one-stop delivery system will be funded locally.

Local workforce development boards and career centers are expected to act in good faith and transparently negotiate infrastructure costs and additional costs of operating a local one-stop delivery system. Funding provided by the one-stop partners to cover the operating costs, including infrastructure costs and additional costs, of the one-stop delivery system must be based on the partner program's proportionate use of the system and relative benefit received. These agreements are designed to enhance access to other partners' federal, state, and local resources and streamline service delivery.

Beginning in 2021, the state board began reporting the required and other partners that are co-located within the comprehensive one-stop centers throughout the state. This reporting was a new requirement under the REACH Act.

Improvements to Strategic Planning Business Relationships
Florida has a streamlined and efficient approach comprised of three key business relationships for coordinating WIOA programs. Each group and associated coordination activities are listed below:

The State Workforce Development Board (CareerSource Florida Board of Directors)
Membership: The Florida Governor and gubernatorial appointees and statutorily designated members, including representatives of businesses; labor organizations; community-based organizations; representatives of organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of eligible youth, including representatives of organizations that serve out-of-school youth; the lead state officials with primary responsibility for WIOA core programs; the Florida Department of Children and Families; two or more chief elected officials collectively representing both cities and counties; the vice-chairperson of the board of directors of Enterprise Florida, Inc.; members of the Florida Legislature; and other representatives and officials designated by the Governor. The collective goals of this board include:

- Approve state workforce system policies on the implementation and management of WIOA.
- Review state and local workforce system performance.
- Approve the budget for the State Workforce Development System and direct the investments of the WIOA set aside budget.
- Initiate and direct board-led initiatives to address the economic needs of the state;
- Direct the creation of the state WIOA plan.
- Provide support and assistance in delivering key policy messages and recommendations to the Governor, legislators, federal entities, and other key stakeholder groups as needed.

WIOA Core Program Leadership Team
Membership: WIOA Partner Program Directors and subject matter experts including staff who represent CareerSource Florida; the Department of Economic Opportunity Division of Workforce Services, and the Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support; the Reimagining Education and Career Help Office, Department of Education, Divisions of Career and Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation Blind Services, and Florida Colleges and Universities:

- Receive and consider recommendations from the WIOA State Plan Implementation Team and provide leadership for WIOA implementation.
- Discuss issues, challenges and opportunities of mutual concern and seek solutions.
- Provide thorough vetting of complex issues prior to submitting key information and recommendations from the WIOA State Plan Implementation Team to the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors.
- Commission workgroups to research strategies and implement action as needed.
- Arrange for resource supports as needed.
- Prepare and deliver key information and recommendations for implementation, strategy development, and performance management to the Governor, agency heads, legislators, the state workforce investment board, and federal Departments of Labor and Education.

WIOA State Plan Implementation Team
Membership: Planning Directors and Program Leadership for WIOA partner programs:

- Review and interpret legal and regulatory requirements of WIOA.
- Incorporate federal requirements into state planning and performance processes.
- Identify and communicate resource and information supports across WIOA partner programs.
- Draft policies, guidelines, and tools for developing and tracking the state plan.
- Prepare and deliver state plan (and plan updates) and coordinate the development and delivery of local plans.
- Track approved state plan workgroups and activities established to achieve identified goals.
- Consider and approve recommendations for workgroups.
- Report plan progress to the WIOA Core Program Leadership Team.
- Make recommendations for additional workgroups or resources needed to maintain progress.
- Communicate key messages and issues to agency heads.

These activities allow workgroups to engage in coordinated projects designed to continue implementing and enhancing the workforce system within the WIOA framework. These workgroups include planning directors, program leadership, and subject matter experts for WIOA partner programs.

Examples of topics these workgroups cover include:

- Enhancing infrastructure and data sharing processes, including development of state data sharing agreement.
- Conducting studies to evaluate case management systems and make recommendations for features and functionalities of future Florida workforce network solutions (copy of reports available upon request).
- Implementing a Continuous Improvement Performance Initiative that collects and tracks key performance indicators that complement the WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance https://careersourceflorida.com/performance/).
- Exploring the use of the Mississippi Data Hub located at the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (NSPARC) to enhance the integration of the Florida workforce network across WIOA core programs for job seekers.
- Designing and implementing a standardized Policy Development Framework (https://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/P).
- Continuing expansion of apprenticeships into key industry sectors.
- Coordinating membership of state and local workforce boards.

- Coordinating development of a network of qualified benefits planners to augment Social Security Administration contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services.
- Completing a stakeholder engagement analysis to determine where to target outreach efforts, including business engagement activities.
- Reviewing services, programs, and partnerships of core WIOA programs to reduce duplication of efforts, identify gaps between programs, and identify and eliminate barriers to coordination among programs.
- Working collaboratively to ensure that staff in the state's workforce development system are cross-trained on workforce-related programs, integrated case management, individual employment planning and other activities to support a no-wrong-door strategy.
- Identifying opportunities to expand services/programs to meet ongoing needs of people with barriers to employment, including people with disabilities.
- Identifying opportunities and innovations in service delivery to ensure that business services are in-line with the changing needs of Florida businesses.

Workgroups use project management and process-driven approaches and tools. This includes charter and mission statements, flowcharting, timelines for deliverables, requirements matrices, and other project and process management documents. Meetings are managed and documented using detailed agendas, and workgroup documents are accessible to all team members across agencies. Decision points, recommendations, and progress updates from the workgroups are vetted through the core program leadership and other key stakeholder groups prior to their presentation to the CareerSource Florida Board. This encourages and ensures transparency, the free flow of information, and open communication between all core programs.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES

1.	The state has a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a state board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents and procedures to resolve such conflicts; https://careersourceflorida.com/careersourceflorida-policies/
2.	The state has established a policy to provide the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of state boards and local workforce development boards and information about activities of state boards and local workforce development boards, such as data on board membership and minutes; Please see the Florida Statute related to the general state policy on public records found at http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Stat- ute&URL=0100-0199/0119/0119.html
3.	The lead state agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs have reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the unified or combined state plan and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;
4.	The state has obtained input into the development of the unified plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local workforce development boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, and the other programs included in the state plan, other primary stakeholders, and the general public and that the unified plan is available and accessible to the general public; The state has provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the state board, including state agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the state board;
5.	The state has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of and accounting for funds paid to the state through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;
6.	The state has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this act, including that the state will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);
7.	The state has taken the appropriate action to comply with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable; All programs are monitored for compliance with the non-discrimination and equal employment opportunity provisions of WIOA;
8.	The federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
9.	The state will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the state board) of the costs of carrying out section 116 from funds made available through each of the core programs;
10.	The state has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
11.	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate;
12.	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate;

CareerSource Florida

Michelle Dennard _____ **DATE:** Feb 8, 2022

Michelle Dennard, President and CEO

Department of Economic Opportunity

Dane Eagle
Dane Eagle (Feb 10, 2022 17:15 EST) _____ **DATE:** Feb 10, 2022

Dane Eagle, Secretary

Florida Department of Education

Richard Corcoran
Richard Corcoran (Feb 8, 2022 20:02 EST) _____ **DATE:** Feb 8, 2022

Commissioner Richard Corcoran

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

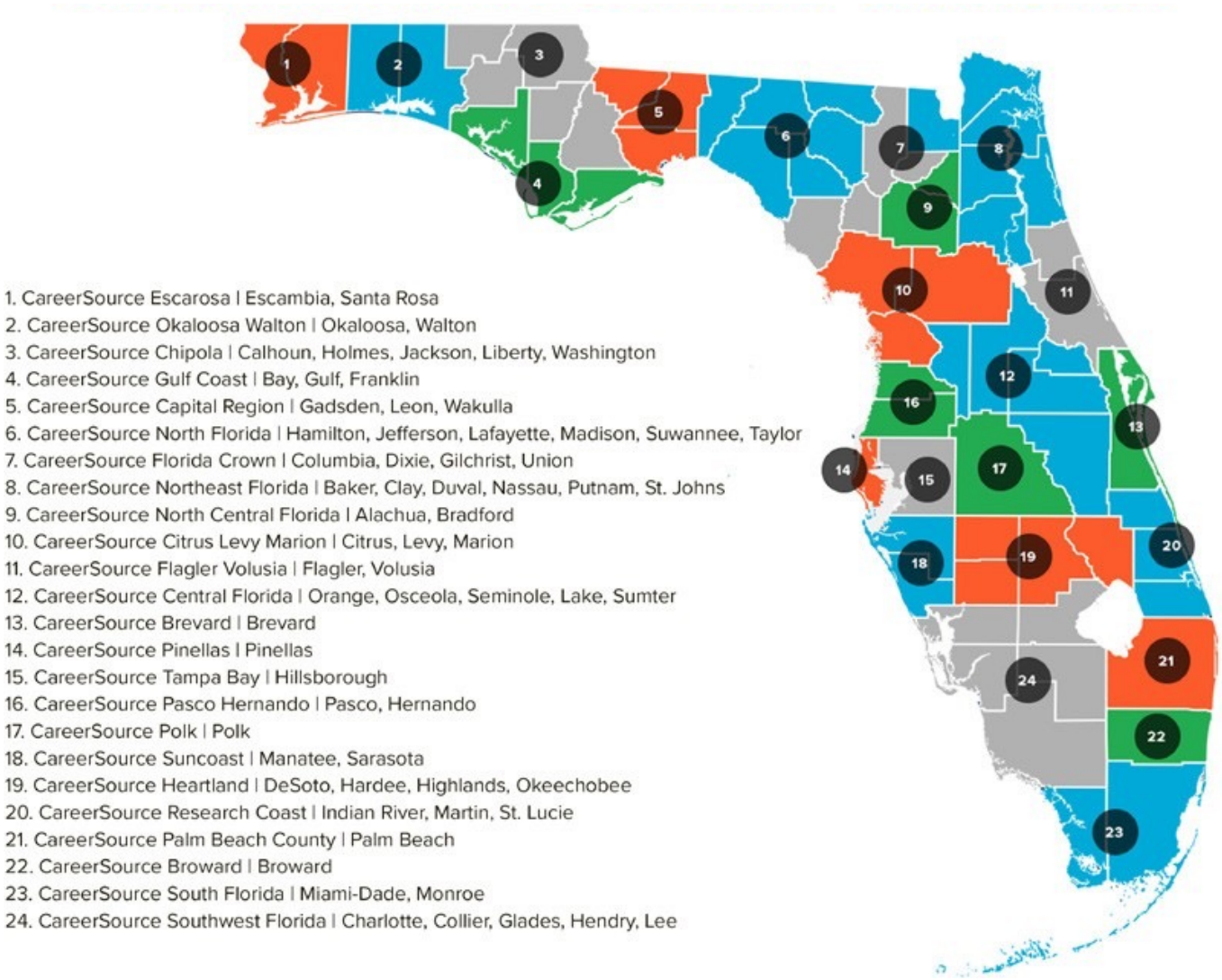
(a) General Requirements

(1) Local Workforce Development Areas

(A) Regions and the Local Workforce Development Areas Designated in the State

Florida's 24 local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and the local workforce development areas (LWDAs) they serve are shown in the map below and are listed at careersourceflorida.com.

Figure 6.01
CareerSource Florida Network Map



(B) Process Used for Designating Local Areas

Local Workforce Development Areas
CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 094 – Local Workforce Area Designation outlines the process for new and subsequent area designation, including the defined performance and fiscal criteria for LWDBs under WIOA.

To determine subsequent local workforce development area designation, the term "performed successfully" means the local workforce development area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance for the last two consecutive years for which data are available, and that the local area has not failed the same measure for the last two consecutive program years.

"Sustained fiscal integrity for all program years" means the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor has not made a formal determination that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area improperly expended funds due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration for the two-year period preceding the determination.

Planning Regions
Florida designated a planning region to each local workforce development area (LWDA). This designation was agreed upon based on consultation with the Florida WIOA Task Force, state stakeholder groups, and the LWDBs. Florida identified six factors for the development of regions including:

- Single Labor Market.
- Common Economic Development Area.
- Federal and Non-Federal Resources to Carry Out WIOA Activities.
- Population Centers.
- Commuting Patterns.
- Industrial Composition and Sector Alignment.

Various regional alignments may be considered and proposed by workforce system stakeholders using these six factors, including state policymakers, state and local CareerSource Florida board members, state and local workforce staff, partner program staff, business and industry partners, and workforce

and education associations. For the state to consider and designate LWDAs, a formal proposal must be presented to the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors including a rationale for the local area designation using the six factors and a description of why the regional alignment proposed is in the best interests of the state, business and industry, and workers and job seekers. Each local workforce development board plan incorporates its respective strategies to continue evaluating potential regional planning areas.

(C) Appeals Process Referred to in WIOA Section 106(b)(5)

Florida has established an appeals process specific to objections on local area designations. This process is published in Guidance Paper 005 found online at: http://floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/2017-guidance-papers/localareadesignatn-ap94.pdf?sfvrsn=2

The appeal process has never been invoked or used.

(D) Appeals Process Referred to in WIOA Section 121(h)(2)(E)

The U.S. Department of Labor developed a uniform policy for acceptable methods of cost allocation and resource sharing with respect to funding the one-stop delivery system. Under WIOA and consistent with the Uniform Guidance, funding provided by the one-stop partners to cover the operating costs, including infrastructure and additional costs, of the one-stop delivery system must be based on the partner program's proportionate use of the system and relative benefit received.

WIOA requires LWDBs, with the agreement of the chief local elected official, to develop and execute MOUs with required partners on the operation of the one-stop delivery system in the local service delivery area. Each LWDB must include an IFA in the MOU with required partners. The IFA details how infrastructure costs for the one-stop delivery system will be funded locally. Local workforce development boards and career centers are expected to act in good faith and negotiate infrastructure costs and additional costs of operating a local one-stop delivery system transparently.

CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 106, Memorandums of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements, requires LWDBs to make every effort to resolve any disputes at the local level and describes the process for resolution of issues, including escalation from the LWDB to senior leadership in the affected agencies (e.g., CareerSource Florida, DEO, and DOE).

If a LWDB is unable to execute MOUs or agree on infrastructure costs with required partners, all parties shall attempt to resolve the issue in a timely and efficient manner. If resolved, no further action is necessary. If issues regarding MOUs and/or IFAs remain unresolved, LWDBs shall document the issue and efforts at resolution. Documentation is forwarded to the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO, Division of Workforce Services), and the Chancellor for Career and Adult Education, the Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Director of the Division of Blind Services, or the executive

administrator(s) of agencies responsible for administering the partner's program. DEO and the appropriate division will work to resolve the impasse and secure an executed agreement. A joint decision shall be transmitted within 30 calendar days of receipt.

Issues will be remanded back to the local partners to execute recommended action. If issues remain unresolved, the LWDB must notify CareerSource Florida and include the details of the impasse.

CareerSource Florida will work with the Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of DEO, or other agency heads to resolve the impasse and provide a resolution response to all parties. Decisions are considered final.

If recommended action or required resolution is not implemented, the State Funding Mechanism (SFM) will be initiated.

Under the Local Funding Mechanism (LFM), one-stop career center partners may determine what funds they will use to pay for infrastructure costs. There are no specific caps on the amount or percentage

of overall funding a partner may contribute to fund infrastructure costs under the LFM, except those contributions for administrative costs may not exceed the amount available for administrative costs. LFMs provide LWDBs and partners with the flexibility to design and fund a one-stop delivery system through a consensus to meet the needs of their local area by leveraging the funds and resources available to provide program services. The intent of the LFM is to encourage local areas to reach a consensus in developing a local IFA.

After all local MOU and IFA negotiation options have been exhausted, even when only one required partner is unable to come to an agreement, the SFM is triggered.

The CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, represented by its CareerSource Florida staff, consults with the Governor regarding the funding of infrastructure costs and is responsible for developing the formula used by the Governor under the SFM to determine a one-stop career center's budget.

Under the SFM, the LWDB is required to calculate the statewide funding caps and the amount available for local areas that have not reached consensus and to determine the partners' contributions for infrastructure. The statewide caps are calculated by considering total funding for a partner against the statutory caps specified in WIOA for infrastructure costs. The SFM is only applicable to required partners and cannot be triggered by additional partners not reaching a consensus.

If the SFM is triggered, LWDBs must provide a notice that they are unable to reach a consensus on infrastructure funding to the Governor, CareerSource Florida and DEO. Notification must be provided by the specific date established in DEO's guidance on infrastructure funding.

The SFM requires complex calculations and determinations and seeks the guidance of multiple parties. Reaching consensus on IFAs must be completed by the LWDBs no later than March 30, prior to the beginning of the subsequent program year beginning July 1.

Local workforce development boards must provide local negotiation materials to DEO. The following steps will be executed:

- Determine one-stop career center infrastructure budget(s).
- Establish cost allocation methodology.
- Determine partners' proportionate shares.
- Calculate statewide caps.
- Assess the aggregate total of infrastructure contributions as it relates to the statewide cap.
- Adjust proportionate shares.

Local workforce development boards and partners may appeal the state funding mechanism and determination of shared infrastructure costs. The appeal may be founded on the basis that the determination is inconsistent with proportionate share requirements, the cost contribution limitations, or the cost contribution caps consistent with the process described in the state plan.

Appeals must be sent within 21 days from the LWDB's receipt of the state's determination on shared infrastructure costs. Appeals must be filed in writing with the President and CEO of CareerSource Florida. Decisions on appeals will be documented in writing and considered final.

CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 106, *Memorandums of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements*, can be viewed online.

(2) Statewide Activities

(A) State Policies or Guidance for the Statewide Workforce Development System

State policies and guidance are communicated to LWDB staff and partners through state law, this four-year plan, CareerSource Florida strategic and administrative policies, and workforce guidance. Programmatic and administrative requirements are described in a Grantee-Sub-Grantee Agreement executed by DEO and each LWDB requiring their compliance with all federal and state laws, regulations, and any state requirements.

State law, policy and guidance can be found at:
Chapter 445, Florida Statutes (Workforce Innovation Act), Section 1008 FETPIP and other administrative requirements described in State Guidance http://leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/ .

- Department of Economic Opportunity Regulations, Division of Workforce Services, Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 73B flrules.org.
- State Four-Year Plan http://careersourceflorida.com/.
- Policy Development Framework https://careersourceflorida.com/about-us/policies-and-initiatives/.
- State Board Strategic Policies https://careersourceflorida.com/.
- Local Planning Instructions.https://careersourceflorida.com/docking/WIOALocalPlanningInstructionsTwo-year-modification.docx.
- DEO Administrative Policies organized by workforce program http://floridajobs.org/workforce-board-resources/policy-and-guidance/guidance-papers.
- DEO Memoranda, organized by year of issuance http://floridajobs.org/local-workforce-development-board-resources/professional-development-and-training/training-materials.
- DEO Monitoring Tools: http://floridajobs.org/local-workforce-development-board-resources/program-monitoring-and-reports/Programmatic.
- DEO forwards federal directives and other resource materials via communiqués (issued when DEO comments on the federal document) or via email notification and posting on the DEO website.

Use of Statewide Funds for Workforce Development Activities
Funding provided under WIOA must be allocated in accordance with the authorizing federal act (Public Law 113-128, as amended). This act defines specific allocation methodologies for its three principal funding streams (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) to be followed in allocating funding to LWDBs. It also defines allowances for funding levels for the state rapid response initiative and state-level set- aside funds (also referred to as the Governor's Reserve or as discretionary state board funding).

In the case of TANF state-appropriated funds, the Florida Legislature allocates a certain level of funding to the workforce system but does not define specific local allocations or the specific allocation methodology that the state board must use. However, the Legislature does define specific line-item appropriations or specific proviso language which would result in deductions from the total funding available prior to the allocation of TANF funds to LWDBs. The Board of Directors, in determining specific local allocations, is required to maximize funds distributed directly to the LWDBs through these appropriations, with such distributions to be based on the anticipated client caseload and the achievement of performance standards.

Specific direction and approval are needed by the board for key workforce investment areas as follows:

WIOA funding consisting of the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding streams with three primary allocation categories:

- Local Workforce Development Board Allocations
  - State-Level Set-Aside or Governor's Reserve
  - State Rapid Response Funds
- TANF funding including:
  - State-Level Allocations and Initiatives
  - Local Workforce Development Board Allocations and Initiatives
- Jointly managed programs including:
  - Wagner-Peyser 7(a)
  - Wagner-Peyser 7(b)

Each year, Florida is notified of several federal awards and state appropriations to be received during the upcoming fiscal year. In most cases, the manner for distributing these funds among the state and 24 local workforce development boards is defined in the authorizing federal act or in the state appropriations bill; however, the specific state and local calculations are not known until updated allocation factors are applied to the funding awards.

Each year, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors meets to discuss and make decisions about the budget for the upcoming fiscal year and to make decisions about the distribution of federal awards and state appropriations. In June 2021, an action item was developed in collaboration with the Executive Office of the Governor and Department of Economic Opportunity and presented to the Board of Directors defining specific allocations in accordance with the authorizing grants, providing recommendations for the allocation of state-level funds for various state initiatives that advance the statewide strategic goals for workforce development, and outlining the use of specific reserves, commitments, and local workforce development board allocations.

On June 9, 2021, the Action Item for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 CareerSource Florida Network Funding was approved by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors. This Action Item covers the three major funding streams for the workforce system: WIOA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Wagner-Peyser Act (WP). It serves as the financial blueprint for operationalizing the unified brand values, vision, mission, promise, and pillars of the CareerSource Florida network.

Complete information about this action and the related allocations can be obtained online.

(B) Governor's Set-Aside Funding and Rapid Response Funds

Governor's Set-Aside Funding
From these state-level funds, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors allocates certain funds for administrative and program costs of DEO and CareerSource Florida. In accordance with Section

445.003(3)(a)2., Florida Statutes, $2.5 million in WIOA set-aside funds were allocated for the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program, administered by the CareerSource Florida professional team. From

the balance of state-level WIOA funds, the board determines any additional or specific allotments for purposes of state demonstration and pilot projects, as well as other workforce development initiatives.

Get There Faster WIOA Competitive Grants
Seeking to ensure more Floridians have access to education, training, and good jobs, Get There Faster WIOA funding was made available to address priority commitments through competitive grant opportunities. Eligible applicants included LWDBs, state colleges, and technical colleges, which may apply either individually or in partnership. Applicants must demonstrate how their proposed initiatives will be sustained to have long-term impact in enabling program participants to gain and retain employment and attain self-sufficiency. Responses from technical colleges and state colleges must demonstrate collaboration with the local workforce development board(s) to ensure all participants are determined WIOA-eligible and receive case management services. These competitive grants were made available to three target populations:

- **Veterans and Military Spouses** – Provide targeted, in-demand employment opportunities through career, training, and supportive services to military veterans and spouses of active-duty military or veterans facing barriers to employment, with a focus on homeless and disabled veterans.
- **Low-Income Returning Adult Learners** – Provide adults and youth seeking education and training the opportunity to earn industry-recognized cloud computing or other IT-related credentials of value identified by FDOE. Through partnerships enabled among Florida's 48 technical colleges, 28 state colleges, and/or 24 local workforce development boards, low-income returning adult learners and youth who reside in high poverty Florida zip codes would be prioritized for support to participate in an available postsecondary degree or non-degree training program or an apprenticeship program.
- **At-Risk Floridians** – Provide at-risk individuals who are receiving public assistance, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, recovering from substance use disorders, or returning citizens who were justice system-involved the opportunity to receive the education and work skills needed to enhance their employability and likelihood to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Participants will receive ongoing intensive employment services and support aimed at removing employment barriers, increasing participants' likelihood of obtaining and maintaining unsubsidized employment, and decreasing their reliance on public assistance benefits.

Rural Workforce Initiatives

Rural Florida, despite its vast area, is characterized by several common challenges, and the per capita personal income gap between Florida's metro and non-metro areas has widened in recent years.

To support a unified focus on enhancing the economic vitality of rural communities, the state of Florida has identified 29 counties and six cities in three additional counties as Rural Areas of Opportunity. These counties and cities face extraordinary economic and service challenges for people with barriers to employment, including but not limited to transportation, broadband access, and declining labor force participation.

CareerSource Florida is among the statutory state agencies and entities charged with improving services to Florida's economically distressed rural communities through the Rural Economic Development Initiative. In support of this charge, rural workforce support funding would be allocated to LWDBs in rural communities based on a demonstrated need as reviewed and approved by CareerSource Florida and DEO.

Areas of emphasis must include expanding access to job seeker services and collaboration with state and/or technical colleges, including a focus on serving participants identified in the WIOA Get There Faster Competitive Grants.

Florida Ready to Work Foundational Skills Initiative

Foundational skills, often referred to as soft skills or employability skills, are imperative to workforce success and are transferable among industries and occupations. During the pandemic, such in-demand skills, including communication, management/leadership, and critical thinking were also recognized as "resilient skills."

In a Florida Skills Gaps and Job Vacancy Study, commissioned by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, employers were asked about the importance and availability of a range of foundational skills in four primary categories: communication, leadership, problem-solving, and reliability/time management. The study found that Florida employers ranked gaps in foundational skills — twice as frequently as technical skills — as a primary barrier to business and economic growth.

Foundational skills training, by definition, is a preliminary, pre-preparation, pre-screening step in determining readiness for WIOA-funded training. Foundational skills training is a tool most often used to ensure potential WIOA participants — adults, dislocated workers and youth — have the necessary pre-requisite skills and initiative to successfully complete WIOA-funded training and thereby maximize the return on investment for WIOA funding.

These additional Florida Ready to Work funds are intended to serve participants in the priority initiatives above. This funding would provide foundational or soft skills training to WIOA-eligible participants to help address critical skills gaps that impede workforce readiness and competitiveness.

Florida Apprenticeship Standards Builder

CareerSource Florida will work in partnership with FDOE to build a fully operational Registered Apprenticeship Standards Builder. This online clearinghouse will serve as a portal to allow for the uploading and downloading of work processes and related training instruction best practices for apprenticeship programs. The portal will provide an intuitive entry point for employers seeking to develop competency-based apprenticeship programs and modularize standards that will reduce the time needed to create standards of key occupations in key sectors, especially those targeted by the Florida Chamber Foundation's Workforce 2030 report for diversifying the state economy (i.e., advanced manufacturing, financial technology, healthcare, and aviation/aerospace, among others). The portal will allow businesses building apprenticeship programs to draw from a wide variety of already available skills outlines to customize competency-based work process outlines for new apprenticeship programs.

The portal will also provide a user-friendly job task analysis. Provided skills outlines would delineate suggested skills required to be competent in apprenticeship occupations and allow users to pick those skills most relevant for their customized program. The Standards Builder could provide newly developed skills outlines for occupations and utilize existing skills outlines developed by national experts.

Rapid Response Funding to Respond to Layoffs

DEO Reemployment and Emergency Assistance Coordination Team (REACT), managed by the State Rapid Response Coordinator, serves as Florida's state-level Dislocated Worker Unit. REACT is responsible for carrying out statewide rapid response activities and overseeing rapid response and layoff aversion activities carried out by the LWDBs.

DEO REACT staff are the initial contact for employers who submit layoff and business closing notices under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act of 1988. REACT staff request information such as the name and telephone number of the employer's local contact person at each location, the type of business issuing the WARN, the reason for the layoff or business closing, and the possible applicability of the Trade Act. REACT staff enter the WARN notice into the REACT database and distribute the WARN and the background information to the affected LWDBs.

An online summary report of WARN information is available from the DEO public website at floridajobs.org. DEO REACT staff are responsible for updating the list and keeping it current within three business days of receiving a WARN notice. The online WARN Summary Report includes:

- Company name and address.
- Total number of affected workers.
- Affected employer's industry.
- WARN notification date.
- Layoff dates.
- Copy of WARN notice.

Each LWDB has a business services unit that includes a Rapid Response Coordinator. Local board staff respond and provide rapid response services to employers submitting WARN notices and Trade Act Petitions. LWDBs have strong relationships with local economic development staff and the companies in their area. These relationships sometimes allow the LWDB to become aware of challenges a company is experiencing and provide an opportunity to offer layoff aversion assistance prior to WARN activity.

Local workforce development board staff are responsible for making initial contact with a company official to obtain information about the layoff. The Rapid Response Coordinator will then help convene partners to meet with the employer and create a plan of services to meet both the employers' and separating employees' needs. If workers are still attached to the employer, the Rapid Response Coordinator conducts Rapid Response Information Meetings for the workers providing information on various services offered in the CareerSource Florida One-Stop Career Center and through partner programs. Through discussion with the employer, the LWDB may offer strategies that support layoff aversion or rapid reemployment which include:

- Shared work/short-time compensation.
- IWT program opportunities.
- Assistance with filing Reemployment Assistance Compensation.
- Assistance with filing trade petitions, if applicable.
- Information on retraining/upskilling opportunities.
- Job search workshops.
- Financial literacy and planning workshops.

When possible, on-site services are offered to employers requesting Rapid Response Assistance. Rapid response visits are usually made to employers laying off 50 or more workers. When a layoff involves fewer than 50 workers, affected workers are directed to the nearest career center for re-employment services.

In response to the changing business needs identified during the COVID-19 pandemic, the state workforce development board approved a new Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion System Strategic Policy in 2021 requiring that Rapid Response funds be used by LWDBs to establish Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion systems with funds allocated for Rapid Response. This policy emphasizes the layoff aversion practices defined in TEGL 19-16 and ensures that business services are available in each region to assist businesses in preventing job losses.

(C) Rapid Responses in Cases of Natural Disasters

In cases of natural disasters, the DEO rapid response coordinator works closely with the DEO emergency coordination officer who collaborates with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, local county emergency management staff and FEMA to assess the situation and needs of the affected area. Once it is approved by the local emergency management officials, staff from DEO and the CareerSource Florida network deploy to affected areas to deliver rapid response services.

DEO and the CareerSource Florida network have 22 mobile career centers equipped with telecommunications equipment. These mobile units contain computers, workstations and supplies to provide rapid response assistance. After natural disasters, these units can go into affected areas and serve as a mobile career center when local offices are flooded or without power. Mobile career centers serve as branch offices if local services are disrupted by natural disasters.

DEO has a memorandum of understanding with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) allowing DEO to use mobile units owned by MDES if needed.

(D) Early Intervention to Worker Groups on Whose Behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Petition Has Been Filed

The Department of Economic Opportunity uses either a WARN, TAA Petition filing provided by the USDOL Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance (OTAA), newspaper articles or other reliable means of notification to initiate rapid response assistance to workers who have been notified of potential layoffs or have been laid off because of trade. Each LWDB has a business services unit that includes a rapid response coordinator responsible for making initial contact with a company official to obtain information about the layoff. If workers are still attached to the employer, the rapid response coordinator conducts rapid response informational meetings providing workers with information about the services offered at a career center and through partner programs.

If the TAA petition is filed and not approved during the rapid response meeting, the customer is provided a brief description of TAA program services. Workers are advised that once the petition is filed and approved, a scheduled TAA informational session will be made available, and an official notice will be mailed to the trade-affected workers. It is the state's practice not to conduct an actual TAA informational session unless the petition is certified.

If the worker group has not received rapid response assistance, although workers may have officially separated from the company or firm, it is encouraged that a rapid response meeting be conducted. If the petition is approved and rapid response has not been conducted, the state trade coordinator ensures a combined Rapid Response/TAA informational meeting is conducted for the affected workers.

LWDBs maintain a roster of customers who attended orientation meetings and record information in the state management information system, Employ Florida.

When mass layoffs occur, and state-level rapid response funding is needed, LWDBs may request funds to assist workers in need of career counseling, resume preparation, interviewing skills and other workforce services. The state-level rapid response funding may be used for layoff aversion.

(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements

(1) Work-Based Training Models

Quick Response Training (QRT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) programs are flagship training programs of CareerSource Florida. These market-relevant programs provide timely training driven by industry's needs and choice of training providers. QRT and IWT serve as powerful tools for workforce investment in leveraging public/private funds for targeted training for in-demand skills to maximize use of limited public sector funds. Most businesses receiving training grants are within the state's targeted industries, ensuring investment in economically prosperous jobs for Florida's continued growth.

Quick Response Training Program
Established in 1993, the Quick Response Training grant program provides state-level funding for customized training to new or expanding businesses. During 2014-2015, Florida enhanced the application process for businesses to quickly respond to training objectives in demand-driven areas. In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, $8.4 million in Quick Response Training grants were awarded to 16 businesses to provide skills upgrade training to 3,071 trainees.

The Florida Legislature provided funding to develop and launch a strategic marketing and business outreach plan for Florida's nationally recognized Quick Response Training program. The marketing plan was developed to identify a long-term vision and strategic objectives for Quick Response Training. Recommendations for communications and outreach tools and tactics to enhance the program's competitive position and market outreach were considered, based on research that provided a greater understanding of business customers and potential customers; key influencers, including, but not limited to, economic developers, site selection consultants, and workforce development professionals, particularly those within the CareerSource Florida network who provide employment and training

solutions for businesses of all sizes; education and training partners and stakeholders; and public policy leaders.

The plan provided a clear, concise roadmap for CareerSource Florida's current and future investments in the marketing and promotion of Quick Response Training among businesses, including small businesses and key influencers.

This project enabled CareerSource Florida to implement marketing strategies for messaging of business services including Quick Response Training grants to internal and external audiences. CareerSource Florida developed an education and marketing toolkit for partners, marketing and brand-building materials such as brochures, digital outreach, including website enhancements, and social media outreach and advertisements and media placements to support strategic marketing and business outreach objectives.

Incumbent Worker Training Program
Established in 1999, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grants provide funding for customized training including skills upgrade training to existing for-profit businesses. This grant enables Florida to effectively retain businesses and help them stay competitive by supporting skills-upgrade training for existing full-time employees. In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, CareerSource Florida awarded Incumbent Worker Training grants totaling more than $5.9 million to help companies train and retain more than 4,340 full-time employees. A recent study of IWT trainees found that trainees who completed training in 2017-2018 realized median wages 12% higher one year after training.

Florida's IWT program is funded $2 million annually, with additional funding at the discretion of the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors. Funding priority was established by the REACH Act and is awarded in the following order:

- Businesses that provide employees with opportunities to acquire new or improved skills by earning a credential on the Master Credentials List.
- Hospitals operated by nonprofit or local government entities that provide nursing opportunities to acquire new or improved skills.
- Businesses whose grant proposals represent a significant upgrade in employee skills.
- Businesses with 25 employees or fewer, businesses in rural areas, and businesses in distressed inner-city areas.
- Businesses in a qualified targeted industry or businesses whose grant proposals represent a significant layoff aversion strategy.

Since its inception, more than $100 million in requests for IWT funding have been received and 58 percent of the requests have resulted in awards. Extensive outreach through digital advertising, presentations and workshops has been conducted to ensure that as many small businesses as possible are aware of the benefits of the IWT program. IWT is popular and meets a critical need for Florida's businesses. For every $1 of IWT funds invested in training, companies matched $7.39.

Transitional Jobs and On-the-Job Training

Florida utilizes Transitional Jobs and On-the-Job Training (OJT) as additional avenues to provide training opportunities to WIOA participants. LWDBs are encouraged to leverage current partnerships and develop new ones with local businesses and industry to support economic development in their communities.

The coordination of workforce training programs with economic development strategies as envisioned by Florida Law begins at the LWDB level and is coordinated at the state level by CareerSource Florida.

LWDBs may allocate up to ten percent of local Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to transitional jobs for individuals with barriers to employment. LWDBs offering transitional jobs as an individualized career service must ensure transitional jobs are time-limited, wage-paid, subsidized work experiences that help individuals who are chronically unemployed and/or have an inconsistent work history.

LWDBs are also encouraged to target individuals who are long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, and current or former recipients of TANF or SNAP benefits. Transitional jobs are used to assist individuals with establishing a work history and developing skills to obtain unsubsidized employment and progress in the workplace.

CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 100 – Work-Based Learning and Work-Based Training outlines specific requirements LWDBs must include in their local operating procedures governing transitional jobs and other work-based learning activities.

OJT ensures high-quality training for both participants and employers as both have a vested interest in the program's success. Employers have the unique opportunity to train potential candidates the correct and most efficient way to perform tasks for their company at a subsidized cost. Participants receive direct

training and gain new skills to meet the requirements of a new occupation or industry, becoming better equipped to compete for available jobs. All OJT experiences are provided through contracts between local employers and the LWDB.

CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 009 – On-the-Job Training outlines specific requirements governing the provision of OJT.

Customized Training

Customized training is designed to meet the specialized skill needs or requirements of one or more employers. Customized training is conducted through a commitment by the employer to employ an individual upon successful completion of training. The employer is required to pay a share of the cost of the training. Customized training offers opportunities for employers to train individuals to their specific needs and gives the individual a chance to learn and gain desired skills specific to an employer or industry.

CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 100 – Work-Based Learning and Work-Based Training outlines specific requirements LWDBs must include in their local operating procedures governing customized jobs and other work-based training activities.

(2) Registered Apprenticeship

CareerSource Florida works with the Florida Department of Education Registered Apprenticeship Division to identify opportunities to promote registered apprenticeship and explore education opportunities for LWDBs to engage the state apprenticeship office and its local representatives. Florida received an ApprenticeshipUSA State Expansion Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to integrate Registered Apprenticeships within the state's existing workforce and economic development system. As part of the grant implementation, CareerSource Florida has joined forces with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the Florida Department of Education's Office of Apprenticeship, LWDBs, Industry intermediaries and many other strategic partners to identify barriers, opportunities and pilot models of success. By positioning registered apprenticeships as a proven model that helps employers build a highly skilled workforce, education and workforce partners are breaking through systemic barriers to strengthen the state's sector strategy initiatives.

To build capacity and improve awareness, apprenticeship navigators are located at all 24 local boards. The apprenticeship navigator training program provides a repository of accessible tools and resources within a virtual team platform that provides a forum for ongoing support. Additionally, navigators meet monthly to discuss expansion initiatives, identify process delivery improvements, and review outreach/communications mechanisms.

As subject matter experts, apprenticeship navigators at LWDBs work with internal partners to identify the needs of businesses and job seekers. They also work with external partners to leverage resources that increase apprenticeship opportunities. The navigators educate themselves and their partners of local, state, and national apprenticeship funding opportunities such as grants, incentive programs, and philanthropic awards and work closely in partnership with the Florida Department of Education Office of Apprenticeship's apprenticeship training representatives to expand apprenticeship opportunities statewide.

(3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedure

WIOA and its regulations establish the allowable types of training, including both work-based and classroom instruction, with the goal of ensuring provider performance, job-driven training, informed consumer choice, continuous improvement and cost-effective investment of public funds. CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 90 – WIOA Eligible Training Provider List was implemented to provide guidance to LWDBs, and post-secondary training providers of training services programs funded under WIOA regarding the Eligible Training Provider requirements.

Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 08-19 was issued on January 2, 2020, to identify actions that states can take to meet requirements for training providers, program eligibility and the state Eligible Training Provider list in WIOA Section 122 and 20 CFR part 680. This guidance replacing TEGL 41-14 and the subsequent TEGL 41-14, Change 1 has been provided to LWDBs.

The Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act requires DEO, with input from the state workforce development board, DOE and others, to establish WIOA eligible training provider criteria focused on participant outcomes. As a result, DEO released new performance criteria to the CareerSource Florida network and stakeholders for eligible training providers in July 2020.

The REACH Act also requires DEO, along with other stakeholders, to develop an administrative rule to codify state's minimum initial and subsequent eligibility performance requirements. DEO and CareerSource Florida used the Policy Development Workgroup that consists of staff from CareerSource Florida's Strategic Policy and Performance team and DEO's Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support, to include local boards and other stakeholders in developing the administrative rule. The administrative rule has been updated and posted for public comment to solicit recommendations and feedback from interested members of the public. Once the rule is codified, the CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 90 will be updated to align to the changes enacted through the administrative rule.

Information about procedures, eligibility criteria and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility for Registered Apprenticeship programs is available in

CareerSource Florida Strategic Policy 2019.02.13.A.1 – Apprenticeship Policy and CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 100 – Work-Based Training. Upon completion of CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 90, appropriate relevant policies will also be updated as necessary for further implementation of TEGL No. 08-19 providing guidelines for the initial and subsequent determination of eligibility of training providers, the federal and state requirements for training providers, performance standards, the reporting of data and the removal provisions for training providers.

(4) Priority for Public Assistance Recipients, Other Low-Income Individuals, or Individuals Who are Basic Skills Deficient

Implementation of the priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient is completed at the local level. Priority for adult services mustbe given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals, with added priority for individuals who are basic skills deficient. Each LWDB is required to describe in its local plan its locally established policies and procedures to give priority to these customers. The results of these efforts are monitored and evaluated at the state level through the review and evaluation of physical documentation and participant files in the Employ Florida.

(5) Criteria for Local Area Transfer of Funds Between the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

WIOA sec. 133(b)(4) provides the authority for LWDBs, with the approval of the Governor, to transfer up to and including 100 percent of the funds allocated to local areas for adult activities for expenditure on dislocated worker activities, and up to 100 percent of funds allocated to local areas for dislocated worker activities for expenditure on adult activities. DEO receives and reviews such requests for approval, on behalf of the Governor, to allow LWDBs to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

Funds may be transferred between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs when the criteria established in CareerSource Florida Administrative Policy 118 – Adult and Dislocated Worker Funds Transfer Authority have been met. LWDBs are required to ensure any transfer of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs complies with federal law as well as record and document their use and application of local funds.

(c) Youth Program Requirements

(1) Criteria for Awarding Grants for Youth Workforce Investment Activities

When LWDBs award grants or contracts to youth service providers, they must do so in accordance with the following criteria outlined in Administrative Policy 120 – Youth Service Provider Selection that demonstrate the ability of the provider(s) to:

- Effectively provide the youth services sought by the LWDB; specifically, the execution of the 14 youth program elements.
- Coordinate services with other community organizations, vendors, or the LWDB.
- Provide services at a reasonable cost and provide an accurate project budget.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the WIOA program statutory and regulatory requirements, and any other federal, state, and local policies impacting youth program operations.
- Identify partners the provider will work with to help youth achieve successful outcomes.
- Offer or provide access to a continuum of services that allow participants to obtain a General Education Development or high school diploma, enroll into post-secondary education, and obtain employment within their chosen career paths, as applicable.
- Utilize career pathways and sector strategy models with a structured sequence of activities, as well as multiple entry and exit points that provide adequate supportive services, as applicable.

- Meet or exceed performance indicators that will be used to measure the success of the youth served by the program, and the minimum standards and targets set by the LWDB to ensure the LWDB's indicators of performance negotiated with the state for the youth program are met.
- Meet established reporting requirements.
- Demonstrate past performance providing youth services, if applicable.
- Demonstrate strong community and business linkages to ensure the ability to develop work-based learning opportunities and meet the skill and training needs for the state's talent pipeline.

Further, LWDBs must ensure the provider has been in business for at least six months prior to submitting a bid or response to provide services and has a current business license or proof of active compliance with the Secretary of State Corporations Division. LWDBs must also ensure the provider has not been found at fault in criminal, civil, or administrative proceedings related to its performance as a training provider or educational institution, and they must disclose any pending criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding as either a defendant or a respondent.

Further, LWDBs may establish additional criteria to ensure they use providers best positioned to deliver required program elements resulting in strong outcomes for youth participants. If an LWDB establishes additional criteria, it must describe such criteria in its WIOA four-year local plan.

(2) Improved Outcomes for Out-of-School Youth

By leveraging resources and expertise in core programs, Florida will inventory services provided to out-of-school youth and align them in its system integration strategy.

(3) Youth Program Elements

All 14 program elements described in WIOA sec. 129(c)(2) are required to be made available and effectively implemented by LWDBs, including quality pre-apprenticeships. When competitively procuring youth services, LWDBs must ensure offerors/bidders successfully meet the criteria outlined in section VI.(c)(1.) above. LWDBs are also encouraged to evaluate their internal partners for services to youth that may be leveraged within the career center service delivery model.

Each LWDB is required to describe in its four-year local plan the design framework for local youth programs and how the 14 program elements are made available within that framework. In addition to reviewing each LWDB's local plan for compliance, DEO will ensure that all 14 program elements through its annual programmatic monitoring reviews of the LWDBs.

(4) Language Specified in WIOA Sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII)

If an LWDB uses this criterion, it must define the term "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment" and correlating eligibility documentation requirements. The definition must be included in the LWDB's local plan and applicable youth eligibility local operating procedures. Such procedures should be reasonable, quantifiable, and based on evidence that specific characteristics of the youth identified in the definition objectively require additional assistance.

DEO will ensure the local areas have a policy for these criteria by reviewing their local plans to ensure the definition is included, as well as requesting copies of local operating procedures as part of DEO's annual programmatic monitoring reviews of the LWDBs.

(5) State's Definition for Not Attending School and Attending School

Chapter 1003.01(9)(c), Florida Statutes, defines "dropout" as a student who has withdrawn from school, but has not transferred to another public or private school or enrolled in any career, adult, home education or alternative education. If a youth has not received a high school diploma, or a recognized equivalent, and is not attending any school, they are considered a dropout and are an out-of-school youth.

Florida defines "out-of-school individual" as one who is not younger than 16 or older than age 24 at the time of enrollment in a WIOA-funded youth program and who is not attending a regular or alternative school as an out-of-school youth. Youth within the specified age range who attend adult

education or a General Education Development (GED) program are considered out-of-school youth.

Chapter 1003.01(13), Florida Statutes, defines "regular school attendance" as the actual attendance of a student during the school day as defined by law and rules of the State Board of Education. Regular attendance within the intent of Chapter 1003.21, Florida Statutes, may be achieved by attendance in:

- A public school supported by public funds.
- A parochial, religious, or denominational school.
- A private school supported in whole or in part by tuition charges or by endowments or gifts.
- A home education program that meets the requirements of chapter 1002.
- A private tutoring program that meets the requirements of chapter 1002.

The State of Florida defines "in-school youth" as a low-income individual who is not younger than age 14 or older than age 21 at the time of enrollment into a WIOA-funded youth program who is attending secondary or post- secondary school.

This definition includes youth, within the specified age range, attending Florida Virtual Schools and youth in Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) youth facilities who do not have a high school diploma or GED.

(6) Definition of Basic Skills Deficient

Florida uses the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B). The term "basic skills deficient" means an individual who has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the eighth-grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or, is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

Each local board must establish its policy regarding how the local area will determine when an individual meets either element of this definition in its four-year local plan and correlating local operating local operating procedures.

(d) Single-area State Requirements

This section is not applicable.

(3) Waiver Requests (optional)

This section is not applicable.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The state has implemented a policy to ensure adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;
2.	The state has implemented a policy ensuring local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;
3.	The state has established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment boards; members;
4.	The state has established a written policy and procedures ensuring local workforce development boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with; WIOA section 107(c)(2);
5.	Where an alternative entity takes the place of a state board, the state has a written policy and procedures ensuring the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA Section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
6.	The state has established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the state workforce development board help determine the methods and factors of distribution and how the state consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the state in determining the distributions;
7.	The state will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA Section 181(b)(7);
8.	The state will distribute adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the state, and no local area will suffer significant shifts in funding from year to year during the period covered by this plan;
9.	If a state workforce development board, department, or agency administers state laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency will cooperate with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;
10.	The state agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report; and
11.	The state has secured compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise act to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under WIOA section 184(a)(3).

CareerSource Florida

Michelle Dennard _____ **DATE:** Feb 8, 2022

Michelle Dennard, President and CEO

Department of Economic Opportunity

Dane Eagle
Dane Eagle (Feb 10, 2022 17:15 EST) _____ **DATE:** Feb 10, 2022

Dane Eagle, Secretary

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM

(a) Employment Service Professional Staff Development

(1) Provision of Labor Exchange Services under the Wagner-Peyser Act

Florida uses state merit staff when such services are mandated to be provided by state merit staff. Additionally, depending on local area structure, state merit staff and sub-recipient staff may be used for the provision of services.

(2) Professional Development for Employment Service Staff

Florida designed a comprehensive professional certification, formally known as the Florida Certified Workforce Professional (FCWP), to equip all career center and employment service staff with appropriate knowledge to provide high-quality services to job seekers and employers. Within one year of hire, all front-line staff and employees who provide direct services to job seekers or employers are required to complete a series of standardized training modules providing foundational information about the workforce system.

The FCWP curriculum is a thorough online training program that covers topics including workforce system history, workforce program overview, customer service and other job placement techniques. Upon completion of the online training modules, staff are required to complete a comprehensive exam to demonstrate comprehension of the material. Staff must successfully pass the exam to become an FCWP and proficient to assist job seekers and employers.

Staff are required to seek new training opportunities annually to enhance job knowledge and ensure satisfactory knowledge of new workforce tools and existing strategies. To assist staff in attaining continuing education units, Florida designed a FCWP – Tier II certification program. The Tier II curriculum includes in-depth information of specific workforce programs and prepares staff in WIOA, Wagner-Peyser (WP), TAA, SNAP E&T and WT programs. The FCWP – Tier II certification program is a cost-effective method to train staff statewide that is immediately accessible.

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) hosts periodic on-site and web-based training opportunities to share programmatic information and keep staff informed of trends. In collaboration with other agencies, Florida's workforce system enhances the knowledge base of staff by linking duties and responsibilities of career center staff with those of other partners and departments.

(3) Training and Awareness on Identification of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Eligibility Issues

In addition to local workforce development board (LWDB) employees and front-line staff, Florida provides available curriculum from the FCWP certification program to all core partners.

LWDBs may request training directly from the Bureau of Reemployment Assistance to ensure front-line staff are trained on the Reemployment Assistance program, in general, as well as trained to help identify potential eligibility issues for referral to adjudication. Reemployment Assistance educational resources, such as general information and frequently asked questions, are available to local boards.

As DEO continues to evaluate the curricula of the FCWP and FCWP – Tier II certifications, Florida may incorporate curriculum into the FCWP – Tier II certification program that includes program-specific training for Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Reemployment Assistance. The latter will further increase awareness on the identification of Reemployment Assistance eligibility issues.

(b) Assistance in Unemployment Compensation Claims Through Career Centers

Florida's career centers have resource rooms equipped with computers for customers to use. Individuals seeking to file Reemployment Assistance claims are able to connect to the state's Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits management information system to complete the online application and subsequent work registration steps. Career center staff assist customers with general computer and Reemployment Assistance application questions. Career centers are equipped with telephones customers may use to contact Reemployment Assistance representatives for initial claims questions and assistance.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor and CareerSource Florida Board of Directors reaffirmed the state's expectations regarding the vital role LWDBs play in ensuring Floridians, including recipients of Reemployment Assistance benefits, have access to the resources and services needed to obtain meaningful employment. In June 2021, the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors, in coordination with DEO, issued the Availability of Services to Floridians Strategic Policy which described statewide expectations for LWDBs as they develop local policies to enhance customer service, set and publicly post hours of operations for all one-stop career centers, and reinforced the importance of comprehensive communication. To further operationalize the state's expectations outlined in this strategic policy, DEO updated and issued Administrative Policy 093 – One-Stop Delivery System and One-Stop Career Center Certification Requirements that, among other enhancements, outlined specific expectations for LWDBs in supporting the needs of Reemployment Assistance claimants.

(c) Assistance to Unemployment Insurance Claimants and Other Unemployed Individuals

In Florida, most Reemployment Assistance claimants are registered as job seekers in Employ Florida within 24 hours of filing for unemployment benefits. This is accomplished through an automated interface between the Reemployment Assistance claims and benefits management information system and Employ Florida. Each night, new Reemployment Assistance claimant information is sent to Employ Florida where a basic registration is created. This includes the client's email address and a partial work history, if supplied. The career services skills matching functionality of Employ Florida is used to generate an initial listing of current jobs posted in the system based on the employment information given by claimants when filing claims.

This generates an automatic email to the claimant that:

- Informs the claimant of his/her Employ Florida login information;
- Provides a link to the initial list of jobs matching the claimant's employment history; and
- Provides the link the claimant to complete a full résumé and begin active use of the system to search and apply for jobs.

This information is immediately available to staff who use it to contact claimants to provide information about available career center services. The claimant's skills information automatically becomes available to employers seeking specific candidates to fill job openings.

Florida requires all claimants filing an initial online Reemployment Assistance claim to complete a full work registration in Employ Florida prior to receiving benefit payments. The full work registration requires the claimant to create an individual account. This account includes demographic information, an email address attached to the Employ Florida account, and a complete background wizard which collects education, employment and skills information and allows the claimant/job seeker to post a résumé. The full registration process provides LWDBs with integral information with which to target reemployment services to claimants and job seekers. Some claimants elect to complete an online skills assessment available to individuals seeking Reemployment Assistance and job services. The skills assessment measures an individual's skills, abilities and career aptitude.

LWDBs use results obtained from the assessment to provide a customized and tiered level of service. Higher scores or results from the assessment may indicate the claimant is equipped with skills to seek jobs and obtain employment before his or her benefits expire. These individuals require less staff intervention. Lower scores typically indicate a claimant may require more intensive staff intervention before being job ready.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Grant

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program was launched in Florida in 2016 pursuant to the federal change that replaced the Reemployment Assessment program with the RESEA program. In Florida, the target populations are all transitioning veterans receiving unemployment assistance for ex-service members (UCX) and claimants most likely to exhaust Reemployment Assistance benefits. UCX claimants receive the highest level of priority in the selection process and an automatic seat in an RESEA event.

A pool consisting of Reemployment Assistance claimants is created on a weekly basis from initial reemployment assistance claims filed during that week. Prior to the transfer into Employ Florida, the following factors are used in the profiling methodology to determine those individuals most likely to exhaust their benefits based on tenure with their most recent employment, education level, total unemployment rate in the local labor market, last occupation being one of the occupations most in decline (O*NET) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). Excluded from the PREP pool are:

- Claimants whose program identification is other than intrastate claimant;
- Interstate claimants;
- Transitional claimants;
- Claimants on recall status within eight weeks of filing their claim;
- Members of a labor union;
- Claimants who are in approved training; and
- Claimants with a first payment issued more than 42 days after the benefit year beginning date.

The program provides specific intensive services to these populations and helps detect and prevent erroneous Unemployment Insurance (UI) payments. The RESEA program uses a one-on-one intensive appointment process.

Each RESEA participant receives:

- An orientation about the career center's services;
- An initial assessment to determine the claimant's strengths, weaknesses and barriers to employment;
- Labor market information unique to the participant's past or future occupation and work experience. If the labor market information shows the participant's occupation to be in decline, he or she may be referred for training;
- An Employability Development Plan developed jointly by career center staff and the claimant;
- Referral to at least one work-search activity such as résumé writing or an interviewing workshop; and
- Referral to training, if needed.

Consistent with Section 443.091, Florida Statutes, failure to appear as directed for reemployment services at the appointed career center may affect a participant's eligibility for benefits and services. There is a feedback loop to the Reemployment Assistance Program for RESEA participants who miss their initial appointment.

Reemployment Assistance adjudicators review the reason for the participant's failure to report to the career center and if there are no extenuating circumstances (such as moved out of state, returned to work, etc.), issue a determination of ineligibility. The determination of ineligibility includes a disqualification for the week in which the claimant failed to report for reemployment services. When an assessment is completed, an automatic notice is generated and sent to the Reemployment Assistance Program to conduct an eligibility review questionnaire to determine the claimant's eligibility for continued Reemployment Assistance benefits.

(d) Wagner-Peyser Funds to Support UI Claimants

(1) Labor Exchange Services for UI Claimants

Claimants may be selected to attend the mandatory RESEA program if they are profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits prior to returning to work. Selection to attend a RESEA appointment provides claimants with an orientation of the career center to include services available and an initial assessment to determine additional needs. Claimants selected for reemployment services receive an intensive one-on-one session with career center staff. During the one-on-one session, claimants receive an orientation, initial assessment, specific labor market information and development of an employability plan and are scheduled for additional reemployment services. Claimants not profiled and scheduled to attend RESEA are offered the full array of Wagner-Peyser career services depending on the claimant's request and other needs. Career services may be scheduled in Employ Florida, the state's online labor exchange and case management system, requiring the claimant to fulfill his or her obligation to actively pursue employment. Failure to comply with scheduled services may be communicated to the RA program for referral to an adjudicator to conduct fact finding.

Claimants are one priority population supported by Florida's Wagner-Peyser funds. Florida's automated processes allow RA claimants to receive reemployment services quickly and seamlessly. Upon filing an initial claim in the RA reporting system, CONNECT, various data points are collected from the claimant's application and transmitted into Employ Florida to create a basic Wagner-Peyser application in Employ Florida. The claimant is sent an introductory welcome message that provides helpful resources about services in the system they may use in their job search. Every week, characteristics collected from the RA claims application (including, but not limited to, the number of jobs the claimant had over a certain period; the claimant's job tenure and wages; the industry from which the claimant was laid off and the time of year the layoff occurred; the availability of comparable jobs in the area, etc.) is processed through a regression model to obtain a profiling coefficient.

The coefficient value determines the claimants' likelihood of exhausting RA benefits prior to returning to work. This is used to determine which mandatory reemployment program the claimant is assigned to attend. Upon assignment of the coefficient, the claimant is transmitted into a pool used to assign the claimant to the state's RESEA program. This automated pool collection and event assignment typically occurs every Saturday.

Every Monday, LWDB staff are responsible for viewing the number of claimants in their respective pools and creating events accommodating as many claimants as possible. DEO sets the goals of the number of claimants to schedule and complete each year for each LWDB operating the RESEA program. These goals are used to determine how many claimants will be scheduled each week from their respective pools. Every Monday night, based on the number of claimants each LWDB determines to schedule, the automated process uses those numbers to populate events. Once events are populated, Employ Florida automatically generates letters for the LWDB to send to the claimant. Staff prints and mails these letters to the claimants at least two weeks in advance of their scheduled appointments.

(2) Registration of UI Claimants with the State's Employment Service

In 2013, Florida began requiring all claimants who filed an initial online claim to complete a full work registration in Employ Florida prior to receiving benefit payments. The full work registration requires the claimant to create an individual account with basic demographic information and an email address on the Employ Florida account. Claimants are required to use the background wizard to provide education, employment and skills information and to post a résumé. This process provides LWDBs with important information used to target reemployment services to claimants. This registration must be completed before claimants receive any benefit payments.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor directed DEO to suspend the state's online work registration and "actively seeking work" requirements for RA claimants. While this waiver was in place, claimants were not required to complete the work registration process as a contingency of receiving their benefits and they were not required to actively seek work to continue to receive benefits. This waiver ended on May 29, 2021, in alignment with the state's Return to Work initiative which focused on encouraging Floridians to return to the workforce, helping employers attract job seekers, and continuing to fuel the state's economic growth.

(3) Administration of the Work Test for the State Unemployment Compensation System

Section 443.091, Florida Statutes, requires all Reemployment Assistance claimants to engage in systematic and sustained efforts to find work, including contacting at least five prospective employers for each week of unemployment. In small counties – defined as having a population of 75,000 residents or fewer – a claimant must contact at least three prospective employers for each week of unemployment claimed. Claimants file their work search activities online each week and the Reemployment Assistance Program office conducts random work search reviews. Alternatively, instead of claimants contacting three or five prospective employers, as appropriate, claimants may, for that same week, report in person to a LWDB to meet with a career center representative and access reemployment services.

Florida offers an online assessment aimed at identifying a claimant's skills, abilities and career aptitude. The skills assessment is voluntary; therefore, claimants may choose whether to take the skills assessment. The online assessment is made available to any person seeking services from a LWDB or one-stop career center. LWDBs use results obtained from the assessment to provide a customized and tiered level of service. Higher scores or results from the assessment may indicate the claimant is equipped with skills to seek jobs and obtain employment before his or her benefits expire. These individuals require less staff intervention. Lower scores typically indicate a claimant may require more intensive staff intervention before being job ready.

For claimants selected to receive RESEA services, upon completion of the RESEA appointment, career center staff are required to electronically submit information related to whether the claimant reported for and received all required services to satisfy the program's minimum requirements. If a claimant has not reported to the required appointment, an automatic notification is transmitted to the Reemployment Assistance system notifying an adjudicator of potential eligibility issues. The Reemployment Assistance unit conducts a follow up to determine if the absence should result in a disqualification. An eligibility review program (ERP) questionnaire is conducted for all RESEA claimants to determine eligibility for continued benefits.

(4) Provision of Referrals to and Application Assistance for Training and Education Programs and Resources

Regardless of their point of entry, claimants are assessed to determine their employment and/or training needs. The assessment may range from an informal interview to a standardized set of tests. Upon completion of the assessment and interpretation of results, claimants may be referred to a partner program, such as WIOA, for additional training information and/or enrollment. When referred to a partner program, the claimant's eligibility for training is determined based on the program's eligibility criteria. Career centers throughout Florida have collaborated and are often collocated with educational institutions where claimants may be referred for education assistance.

Wagner-Peyser funds help provide preliminary work readiness workshops including interviewing skills, résumé writing and job search strategies and can be used to provide referrals to internal and external training and education programs and resources.

(1) Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)

(A) Assessment of Agricultural Activity in the State

According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the agricultural industry in Florida employs approximately two million people and contributes more than $120 billion to the state's economy. An estimated 47,400 commercial farms in Florida produce nearly 300 different commodities on 9.7 million acres. In 2019, Florida ranked first in the United States in the value of production for bell peppers for fresh market, grapefruit, oranges, sugarcane, fresh market tomatoes, and watermelons; second in the production for bell peppers, fresh market sweet corn, and strawberries; and third nationally in fresh market cabbage, peanuts and squash. During the 2019-2020 season, Florida farmworkers produced 67.3 million boxes of oranges and 4.85 million boxes of grapefruit. All orange production decreased when compared to the previous season. The grapefruit, tangerine and tangelo production increased compared to the previous season. Florida ranks second to California in the production of fresh market vegetables. Florida growers harvested vegetables for fresh market, potatoes, strawberries and blueberries from 178,900 acres in 2020. Cash receipts for all agricultural products totaled $7.80 billion in 2019. This is up seven percent from the prior year's $7.31 billion. All crops accounted for 80.8 percent of these total cash receipts.

According to USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Florida Field Office, 2020 Annual Statistical Bulletin, some pre-harvest activities such as planting, transplanting, tying, staking and pruning are performed by farmworkers, as well as post-harvest activities such as packing and juice processing.

In 2020, Florida ranked first nationally in the production of oranges, sugarcane, fresh market tomatoes and watermelons; second in the production of strawberries; third in the production of cabbage, grapefruit and sweet market fresh corn; and fourth in the production of peanuts.

The following breakdown illustrates Florida's top major labor-intensive crop activity during the 2019-2020 season, based on data gathered internally from local career centers and from external partner agencies.

Figure 7.01
Florida's Top Major Labor-Intensive Crop Activity

Crop	Usual Harvesting Begins	Usual Harvesting Most Active	Primary Geographical Area of Activity	Labor Pool
Oranges	Mid- September	September - June	Polk, Highlands, DeSoto, Hendry, Hardee, Collier, Manatee, Lake, St. Lucie, Martin, Hillsborough, Pasco, Osceola, Indian River, Lee, Charlotte, Glades, Orange, Okeechobee	28,000
Grapefruit	September	September - June	Indian River, St. Lucie, Polk, Hendry, Highlands, Osceola, Charlotte, Collier, Lake, Okeechobee	2,800
Specialty Citrus	June	June - April	Polk, Lake, Highlands, Hendry, Charlotte, Hardee, St. Lucie, Collier, DeSoto, Indian River, Hillsborough, Lee	640
Tomatoes	Mid-October	November - June	Manatee, Collier, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Hendry, Gadsden, Hamilton, Jackson	6,800
Blueberries	March	March - May	Polk, Alachua, Hardee, Hamilton, Levy	7,600
Strawberries	Mid- December	February - March	Hillsborough, Manatee, Hardee, Miami-Dade	11,500
Snap Beans	Mid-October	November - April	Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Suwannee, Hendry, Alachua, Jackson	4,000
Bell Peppers	Mid-October	November - May	Palm Beach, Collier, Hillsborough, Manatee	4,000
Sugarcane	November	November - February	Palm Beach, Hendry, Glades, Martin	2,800
Watermelons	April	May - June	Hendry, Levy, Gilchrist, Highlands, Collier, Suwannee, DeSoto, Alachua, Manatee, Marion, Hardee, Jackson, Sumter, Lake, Gadsden, Washington	3,200
Sweet Corn	Mid- September	November - June	Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, Hendry, Suwannee, Hamilton	2,480
Potatoes	Mid- December	February - May	St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler, Okeechobee, Suwannee	2,000
Squash	September	November - May	Miami-Dade, Collier, Lee, Hillsborough, Gadsden, Jackson, Suwannee	2,000
Cabbage	Mid-October	January - April	Flagler, St. Johns, Palm Beach, Manatee, Putnam	1,200
Cucumbers	Mid- September	November - April	Manatee, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Miami-Dade, Levy	1,200
Tomatillos	April	April - July & September - November	Collier (November - March), Manatee, Gadsden, Jackson	400
Eggplants	April	April - July & September - November	Collier (November - March), Manatee, Gadsden, Jackson, Suwanee	400

Results of the annual Commercial Citrus Inventory show total citrus acreage is 419,452 acres, down three percent from the last survey and the lowest in a series which began in 1966. The gross loss of 11,149 acres is 5,262 acres less than what was lost the previous season. New plantings at 7,885 acres are down from the previous season.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Florida is the top State with horticultural operations in the country, followed by Pennsylvania and California.

An estimated 100,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs) are employed in plant nurseries and ferneries throughout the state. An estimated 2,000 or more MSFWs are employed in sod farming for commercial sale. According to the United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service, the State's expanded wholesale value of floriculture crops at $1.13 billion, is up six percent from 2019. Total greenhouse and nursery cash value sales of $1,140,486.

(i) Assessment of the Unique Needs of Farmworkers

Based on local MSFW-related data and reports, there were an estimated 150,337 MSFWs in Florida during Program Year (PY) 2020. During the low season, this number may drop to fewer than 100,000.

MSFWs need affordable housing that is not substandard, access to public transportation, health insurance coverage and safer working conditions.

As of December 2018, the volume of fruit harvested continued to run behind the prior season on all varieties. Packinghouses were open and running field-run oranges and grapefruit packinghouse eliminations. Grove caretakers continued with normal spray programs, fertilizing, applying herbicide, hedging and taking care of young trees.

(2) Outreach Activities

(A) Farmworkers Not Being Reached by Normal Intake Activities

All career centers have an obligation to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by career centers. Outreach is not limited to those offices designated as significant MSFW career centers or significant multilingual MSFW career centers. Significant MSFW career centers are those centers where MSFWs account for 10 percent or more of annual participants in employment service activities.

Significant multilingual MSFW career centers are centers where 10 percent or more of the MSFW participants are estimated to require service provision in a language(s) other than English. Florida has 10 career centers designated as significant multilingual MSFW career centers (referred to as "significant offices") located in Winter Haven, Bradenton, Tampa, Plant City, Wauchula, Vero Beach, Belle Glade, Homestead, Immokalee and Clewiston. Each significant office has at least one full-time, year-round outreach worker assigned to conduct outreach duties. State merit staff performing outreach are bilingual and, whenever possible, have a MSFW background or are members of a minority group representative of the MSFW population.

Outreach workers focus on areas with significant MSFW populations and work to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached by normal intake activities. Outreach to the MSFW community is accomplished through personal contacts, printed material, the media, community involvement and cooperative ventures with private and public agencies. Outreach workers conduct vigorous outreach activities to places that cater to the needs of MSFWs, including laundromats, barber shops, faith-based communities, local clinics, food fairs, thrift stores, community colleges, the Redlands Christian Migrant Association and Hispanic/Latino shops to ensure the needs of MSFWs are met. Outreach staff familiar with the MSFW community conduct vigorous outreach at laundromats, local barber shops, the faith- based community, local clinics, food fairs, thrift stores and local Hispanic/Latino shops to ensure the needs of MSFWs are being met. Outreach workers make personal contacts with MSFWs daily to explain services available through career centers and other agencies, including the availability of referrals to employment, training and supportive services; information on specific employment opportunities currently available, such as H-2A jobs and other low-skilled jobs; a summary of farmworker rights; and information on the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System, including the Florida Farmworker Helpline.

When an MSFW seeks services at a career center, or is contacted through outreach, the services available through the career center must be explained and provided in writing. To accomplish this, all MSFWs must be provided a copy of the Services to MSFWs through Career Centers (Form DEO-511N) in their native language (available in English, Spanish and Creole). The form contains information on DEO's toll-free Farmworker Helpline for farmworkers who may want to file a complaint, report an apparent violation or obtain employment service information. Additional materials provided during outreach include a brochure outlining basic farmworker rights and other materials from partner agencies describing available services. MSFWs are given the location of and encouraged to visit their local career center to obtain a complete range of employment and training services. The Form DEO-511N includes the locations of offices in Florida.

To contact the maximum number of MSFWs, outreach workers visit sites where farmworkers live, work and gather, including day-haul sites, mass recruitments and orientations at farms, migrant health clinics and sites where social services are provided. Posters and other printed materials are distributed at these locations to maximize outreach efforts into the farmworker community. Outreach workers conduct follow-up to MSFWs as necessary and appropriate to assist MSFWs and ensure their needs are met and to determine if other services are necessary. DEO enhances existing relationships with local, state and federal organizations serving farmworkers, employers and employer organizations to solicit and exchange information on behalf of MSFWs.

Florida operates its ten-designated significant multilingual MSFW career centers during PY 2020 through PY 2024. Following is a list of these career centers, along with corresponding outreach goals per program year.

Figure 7.02
MSFW Significant/Bilingual Office Locations

Career Center Location	LWDA	# of Assigned FTE Positions	# of MSFW Outreach Contacts	# of Quality MSFW Outreach Contacts	# of Staff Days
Winter Haven	17	1	1,800	1,250	185
Tampa	15	1	2,200	1,700	185
Bradenton	18	1	2,000	1,650	185
Plant City	15	1	4,510	3,130	185
Wauchula	19	1	2,200	950	185
Vero Beach	20	1	1,800	1,100	185
Belle Glade	21	1	1,950	1,050	185
Homestead	23	1	2,000	1,350	185
Immokalee	24	1	2,200	1,250	185
Clewiston	24	1	2,200	950	185
Total	**N/A**	**10**	**20,550**	**12,200**	**1,850**

Achieving the level of services attained at career centers is attributed to the unique Florida workforce delivery system and its intensified efforts to reach and serve all customers. Outreach workers are required to spend a total of 185 staff days, or 80 percent of staff time, conducting outreach. For PY 2020, MSFW outreach workers made 12,693 outreach contacts with MSFWs. Florida's focus on outreach allowed the state to exceed its goal of 20,550 MSFW outreach contacts for 2020. For PY 2020, 138,334 Wagner-Peyser applications were entered in Employ Florida. Of those applications, 3,867 were MSFWs. Processing job applications, conducting assessments and providing non-agricultural job referrals were also emphasized to assist in year-round employment. This allowed the state to increase the number of MSFWs who were placed in permanent positions (jobs over 150 days).

(B) Technical Assistance to Outreach Workers

Outreach workers are trained in all aspects of employment-related services to MSFWs. New outreach staff receive training on Wagner-Peyser services, benefits and protections afforded to MSFWs through the career centers and procedures by the LWDB. The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) provides onsite technical assistance to new staff on MSFW regulations including outreach requirements, full applications in Employ Florida, reporting requirements and agricultural job orders. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DEO encouraged outreach workers to follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Florida Department of Health guidelines when conducting outreach to MSFWs. Whenever possible, staff are encouraged to perform virtual outreach services via phone, email or text to assist MSFWs with barriers preventing access to career center services.

The SMA also provides training on the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System and basic farmworker rights including training on protecting farmworkers against human trafficking. Outreach workers are encouraged to observe the working and living conditions of MSFWs and, upon observation or upon receipt of information regarding a suspected violation of state or federal laws, to document and report the suspected violation to the appropriate enforcement agency for investigation.

The significant multilingual MSFW career centers were monitored remotely this program year by the SMA. The SMA provided technical assistance to significant multilingual MSFW career center staff during the onsite monitoring reviews to address any immediate training needs.

Outreach workers are encouraged to refresh their knowledge of policies and procedures through online training, as well as through in-person trainings and webinars offered by DEO. Florida also has an established complaint system supported by written procedures.

Refresher training and farm labor compliance training is provided to outreach workers during the annual MSFW Annual Staff Development Conference. The annual conference is held in partnership with the Florida Department of Education's Farmworker Career Development Program (FCDP), Florida's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee. When the conference is held jointly, training sessions are designed to foster increased collaboration and increased awareness between partners.

The annual conference customarily includes guest speakers from state and federal enforcement agencies such as the USDOL Wage and Hour Division, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Florida Department of Health. DEO staff customarily present workshops on Wagner-Peyser and WIOA requirements, the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System and Foreign Labor Certification Job Orders, among others. The workshops provide career center staff with knowledge necessary to discuss farmworker rights with MSFWs onsite and during outreach.

(C) Increasing Outreach Worker Training and Awareness Across Core Programs Including UI

Career center staff, including outreach workers, have access to online training modules and resources through DEO's website for core programs including unemployment insurance (UI) benefits (referred to as Reemployment Assistance benefits in Florida). In-person trainings and webinars are offered each year. Outreach workers use this information to ensure MSFWs are aware of the different programs and services available through the workforce system as well as their potential eligibility for Reemployment Assistance benefits.

(D) Providing State Merit Staff Outreach Workers Professional Development Activities

The MSFW Annual Staff Development Conference provides outreach workers with professional development activities to ensure they are proficient at providing high-quality services to job seekers and employers. Outreach staff are encouraged to attend the MSFW Annual Staff Development Conference.

(E) Coordinating Outreach Efforts with NFJP Grantees as Well as with Public and Private Community Service Agencies and MSFW Groups

To maintain targeted service levels, outreach services are supplemented through partner agencies. Informal cooperative agreements with other public and private social service agencies, such as local providers of the NFJP, are established to provide joint outreach efforts to the MSFW population. For PY 2020, approximately 482 additional contacts were made through nonfinancial agreements with cooperating agencies.

A memorandum of understanding outlining outreach efforts was executed with the Florida Department of Education's FCDP, the state's NFJP grantee. The memorandum outlines requirements for significant career center outreach staff and FCDP local provider staff to supply information about other partner programs and services during individual outreach efforts, conduct outreach jointly when feasible, and report outreach activities and contacts to the other party. Career centers with agricultural activity that do not meet the ten percent criteria for the significant career center designation are required to have nonfinancial agreements with cooperating agencies.

The MSFW outreach workers maintain a continuing relationship with community groups, public agencies and advocacy groups involved in the welfare of farmworkers. Contact is made with agricultural employers for possible job openings and outreach workers to assist career center staff in recruiting MSFWs for specific job orders.

(3) Services Provided to Farmworkers and Agricultural Employers through the One-Stop Delivery System

(A) Employment and Training Services to the Agricultural Community

(i) Career and Training Services Provided to MSFWs

Career and training services are provided to MSFWs. Basic and individualized career staff-assisted services are provided through outreach and in career centers to MSFWs. Florida's management information system, Employ Florida, allows for self-services at any location without the need of visiting a career center. Customers using self-services at the career center have access to staff assistance.

The MSFWs' knowledge, skills and abilities are assessed to determine appropriate jobs to which they may be referred. Job referrals are provided through mass recruitments, H-2A job referrals, other low-skilled job referrals and job developments. Effort is made to refer MSFW job seekers to H-2A job orders whenever possible. Jobs located in Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, Alabama and Delaware H-2A jobs are posted in Employ Florida. Staff ensure terms and conditions of employment are discussed prior to referral and that the job seeker is aware of afforded assurances. H-2A job orders are suppressed in the Employ Florida system to ensure maximum protections to the applicant. Staff are required to follow up on referrals made to H-2A job orders.

Referrals are made to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to reduce language barriers and improve resume and interviewing skills. Workshops enable MSFWs to become more competitive in the workforce. Staff provide career guidance and suggest training programs best suited to the needs of customers who are not job ready or those prepared for a change in occupation. Referrals are made to local FCDP training programs and LWDB training programs. Co-enrollments take place when possible. Other programs' MSFWs are referred to include VR for MSFWs with disabilities, older workers programs and housing assistance agencies. Staff are familiar with and refer MSFWs as appropriate to other community supportive services.

The SMA conducts quality assurance visits to significant offices on an annual basis to ensure MSFWs have equal access to employment opportunities through Florida's career center delivery system. Wagner-Peyser monitoring staff ensure MSFWs have equal access to services during quality assurance desk reviews of non-significant LWDBs.

(ii) Services to Agricultural Employers

Florida ensures all career centers make assistance available to employers, including those in the agricultural industry.

Outreach to public and private community agencies, MSFWs and employer organizations is conducted to facilitate the widest possible distribution of information about employment opportunities. Career center staff in significant multilingual MSFW centers and LWDB business services representatives perform marketing outreach to growers, harvesters and processors. Career centers obtain employer contact information, maintain existing contacts and encourage employers to create job orders in Employ Florida through local career centers. Career center staff assist MSFWs in the preparation of applications for employment services and assistance in obtaining referrals to current and future employment opportunities. DEO office staff promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers through participation at employer conferences and seminars and through DEO's website.

The SMA partners with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division and agricultural employer organizations to conduct employer forums for agricultural employers and provide information on available services for employers including services pertaining to the agricultural industry such as local mass recruitments and the Agricultural Recruitment System.

Identifying the needs of employers is a high priority. CareerSource Florida's efforts continue to promote strategies that support the growth of targeted industries in the state. Sector strategies are regional, employer-driven partnerships of industry, education and workforce development leaders focused on identifying solutions to the workforce needs of the local labor market. Strategies used to promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers include recruiting agreements, job fairs and establishing new business relationships. These efforts include advising worker advocates and groups through job order notifications published in English and Spanish and providing notification to employers and advocates of changes to the Foreign Labor Certification Program requirements affecting workers.

Florida continues to see an increased number of agricultural employers using the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program. The H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program allows U.S. employers who meet specific regulatory requirements to bring foreign nationals to the United States to fill temporary agricultural jobs. DEO's Foreign Labor Certification office enters H-2A job orders in the state's online labor exchange system, Employ Florida. During PY 2020, the Department processed 1,308 H-2A applications and job orders for Florida employers, an increase from the previous year. Applications are expected to steadily increase for PY 2021, based on previous years' trends. During PY 2020, 182 MSFWs were referred for job placements under the H-2A program.

Career centers in significant agricultural areas are provided approved clearance (job) orders that provide staff, including outreach workers, with current information on job availability. Career centers are provided information about out-of-state clearance orders found in Employ Florida. Domestic farmworker crews, family groups and individuals are recruited and referred to agricultural employers who submit job orders in agricultural occupations. For PY 2020, 184 MSFWs were referred to agricultural employers as indicated in the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Service Level Indicator Report.

(B) Marketing the Employment Service Complaint System to Farmworkers and Other Farmworker Advocacy Groups

Outreach workers take complaints while in the field. The Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System is marketed to farmworkers and to agencies. The Florida Farmworker Helpline is used to promote the complaint system. The helpline is a toll-free number farmworkers can call to file a complaint or report violations anonymously. Outreach materials such as the Form DEO-511N, farmworker rights brochure and Farmworker Helpline business cards include the helpline number. This number is featured prominently on complaint posters located in significant MSFW career centers. Helpline business cards are provided to agencies and businesses serving farmworkers. Farmworkers and agencies are informed that complaints can be filed in person at any career center or with an outreach worker.

(C) Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to Agricultural Employers

The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) is an alternative to the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program offered to employers who have temporary agricultural or food processing jobs and need workers. The SMA promotes the ARS during employer forums to agricultural employers and employer organizations as a more cost-effective alternative to H-2A. Outreach workers provide information on this program during employer visits. ARS brochures are shared with employers during forums and visits.

(4) Other Requirements

(A) Collaboration

The memorandum of understanding previously described establishes a basis for collaboration between LWDBs and FCDP local projects statewide. Local FCDP providers foster memorandums of understanding with their LWDBs.

As part of a strategic initiative to increase collaboration and co-enrollments with FCDP local providers, the SMA and FCDP state staff facilitate onsite meetings with local WIOA program staff, case managers, office managers, outreach staff and local FCDP coordinators. These meetings usually occur during the SMA's onsite monitoring visits.

Partnerships between the significant multilingual MSFW career centers and the local FCDP grantees have strengthened over the past few years resulting in an increase in cross-referrals and co-enrollments of MSFWs for services. The Department of Education (DOE), through a contract with DEO, continues to utilize a database module in Employ Florida, which launched on January 26, 2016, for FCDP to provide activities and services that will better serve Florida's MSFW population. Local FCDP providers have staff accounts for their own program module in Employ Florida to document intake, enrollment, services and outcomes. FCDP providers can view Wagner-Peyser services provided to mutual customers. This maximizes a seamless service delivery to MSFW customers by career centers and FCDP providers. The partnership between DOE and DEO has greatly enhanced collaboration efforts and allowed for efficient data sharing and co-enrollments between the Wagner-Peyser and FCDP programs.

(B) Review and Public Comment

Information was solicited from NFJP grantees and other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and interested organizations for at least 30 days for review and comments. Comments received are considered in the preparation of the final AOP.

(C) Data Assessment

Florida is the second most MSFW significant state in the country, behind California. In PY 2019, the state had a total of 8,301 MSFW applicants in its labor exchange system and in PY 2020, there were a total of 3,867 MSFW applicants. These reductions in MSFW applications from PY 2019 and PY 2020, 8,380 and 3,867, respectively, are likely attributed to MSFWs not returning to Florida after migrating north for work and an increase in the use of foreign workers through the H-2A program.

Florida meets its goals of providing services to MSFWs on a quantitatively proportionate level as those provided to non-MSFWs. MSFW Indicators of Compliance Reports for the past four program years show all five equity ratio indicators are met. These indicators are referrals to jobs, referrals to supportive services, received staff assisted services, career guidance and job development contacts.

(D) Assessment of Progress

As previously reported, Florida's focus on outreach allowed the state to exceed its goal of 20,550 MSFW outreach contacts during the prior three years, except for 2020. The goal of 12,200 quality outreach contacts where staff assisted services were provided was not met. Only 3,547 staff assisted outreach contacts were made during PY 2020, a rate of 29 percent. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted outreach activities. As a result, 608 staff days of the 1,850 goals for staff days of outreach was not met. The goal of 185 staff days per outreach worker was still ambitious, even after being reduced from 210 and then 190 staff days in previous plans. The required number of staff days dedicated to outreach was decreased to 185 per outreach worker.

The goal for 500 outreach contacts made by cooperating agencies was not met; a maximum of 482 contacts was reported for PY 2020. DEO, in partnership with the LWDBs, strives to meet or exceed all equity and minimum service level indicators. During PY 2020, Florida met four of five equity ratio indicators and six of seven minimum service level indicators.

The level of services attained is attributed to intensive outreach efforts by MSFW outreach workers and career center staff properly serving customers.

The SMA is involved in the LWDBs reporting system by providing training and technical assistance during monitoring visits to address statistical data related to MSFWs. The SMA maintains on-going contact with MSFW outreach workers to ensure accurate data are collected and reports are submitted in a timely manner. The report accurately reflects data of LWDBs' efforts to assist MSFWs through out-of-office contact, referrals to supportive services and provisions of employment information and referrals.

(E) State Monitor Advocate

The SMA formulated the 2020-2024 WIOA Unified Agricultural Outreach Plan. All comments, suggestions and recommendations of the State Monitor Advocate are incorporated in the plan.

Public Comment

WIOA 2020-2024 Agricultural Outreach Plan Two-Year Modification Feedback Summary
In developing the AOP, DEO solicited information and suggestions from the NFJP Grantees, MSFW organizations, LWDBs, Florida Department of Education, Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Florida Department of Health, Agricultural Labor Programs, Inc. (ALPI),

Florida Legal Services, Inc., Coalition of Florida Farmworker Organizations, Inc., Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc., Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA), Catholic Charities, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association and The Florida Citrus Mutual.

The WIOA Unified Plan 2022-2024 Two-Year Modification and the Agricultural Outreach Plan was published for public comment. There were no comments from the public that represent disagreement with the plan.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with career centers, or a plan and timeline was developed complying with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec. 121(e)(3));
2.	The state agency complies with requirements under 20 CFR s. 653.111 (state agency staffing requirements) if the state has significant MSFW career centers;
3.	If a state workforce development board, department, or agency administers state laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and
4.	SWA officials: 1) initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWA's behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.

Michelle Dennard _____ **DATE:** Feb 8, 2022

Michelle Dennard, President and CEO

Department of Economic Opportunity

Dane Eagle
Dane Eagle (Feb 10, 2022 17:15 EST) _____ **DATE:** Feb 10, 2022

Dane Eagle, Secretary

VIII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

Florida's Vision for Adult Education
The vision of Florida's adult education system is to hold learners at the center and deliver outcomes that promote full participation in the workforce, resulting in high-quality credentials of value, and close equity and achievement gaps.

Florida's Strategic Priorities

- **Priority 1:** Promote regional partnerships to ensure comprehensive approaches that improve learner outcomes.
- **Priority 2**: Expand the state's talent pipeline by attaining credentials of value and acquiring postsecondary certifications, industry-recognized credentials, and degrees.
- **Priority 3**: Ensure all learners receive high-quality instruction that prioritizes measurable labor market needs and outcomes while eliminating equity and achievement gaps in the community.
- **Priority 4**: Incent, measure, and support enhanced program effectiveness.

(a) Aligning of Content Standards

Florida has a longstanding history of standards-based instruction from the original Sunshine State Standards, the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, and in 2014, the adoption of the Florida Standards (English Language Arts and Mathematics) by the State Board of Education. In 2021, the Florida Department of Education implemented new standards representing the highest quality knowledge-based standards in the nation.

The new Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards provide an excellent foundation for teaching and learning for adult learners. The B.E.S.T. Standards are the official state-adopted academic content standards fulfilling statutory requirements under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. s. 6311(b)(1)). The B.E.S.T. Standards share the dual purpose of preparing K-12 and adult students to be college and career-ready.

Florida sets clear expectations between K-12 and its content-equivalent counterpart in adult education by ensuring standards-based instruction is aligned to state-adopted content standards in K-12. This guarantees all students (K-12 or adult) have access to a high-quality, market-driven education regardless of their pathway to graduation. The state's Adult Basic Education (ABE) standards are the grade level equivalent of K-8 of the B.E.S.T. Standards and are revised and reviewed annually by the Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE). The State Board of Education approves the adult education curriculum frameworks containing the aligned standards.

At the secondary level, adult high school credit programs implement the same course descriptions and standards as those used in the K-12 educational system and adult students participate in the same statewide assessment program measuring student mastery of the B.E.S.T. Standards and, upon successful completion, adult education students earn a standard adult high school diploma. GED® preparation courses are a component of Florida's adult secondary level programming aligned with Florida's Standards and its college and career readiness standards. Upon successful passage of all four subject test areas, students

are awarded a state of Florida High School Diploma (high school equivalency diploma) issued by the Florida Department of Education.

A high school equivalency diploma is issued to candidates who successfully demonstrate competency in the areas of Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. The assessment used for the diploma program is the 2014 GED® Test, which was selected through a competitive procurement to designate a single assessment product for high school equivalency. The review process confirmed the alignment of the assessment with the existing challenging academic standards. The current contract period for using the assessment is through June 2024.

The four-year State Plan communicates Florida's commitment to the continuous improvement of adult education programs and equitable access to quality adult education programs to all students, including special populations. It aims to not just align adult basic education and secondary adult education programs to the state's new B.E.S.T. Standards but proposes aggressive and innovative ways to reengage Florida's adults in the completion of their high school diploma while connecting them to a credential of value or a postsecondary credential.

(b) Local Activities

In accordance with Section 231 under Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) of WIOA, DCAE awarded multi-year grants to eligible providers of adult education services through a competitive process for 2021-2023. This includes grant projects funded under Section 225 – Corrections and Other Institutionalized Individuals and Section 243 – Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE). Family literacy programs are optional, and activities may be included in the local project applications.

DCAE administers funds to eligible providers and provides program/performance oversight to grantees. DCAE provides funding to eligible local providers for the provision of adult education services through a competitive Request for Application (RFP) process. The RFP is the mechanism through which DCAE identifies, assesses, and awards multi-year grants to eligible providers to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities throughout the state.

An eligible provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals and may include:

- Local education agency.
- Community-based or faith-based organization.
- Volunteer literacy organization.
- Institution of higher education.
- Public or private nonprofit agency.
- Library.
- Public housing authority.
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services.
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above.
- Partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

The DCAE is in the research and planning phase of moving toward a regionalized approach for adult education delivery with key WIOA partners. DCAE will host a multi-year grant competition in 2023 for eligible providers to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities in a coordinated effort with regional employment needs in mind. DCAE hosted regional planning meetings in summer 2022 to assist providers in preparing for this regional shift. The grant competition will be publicized through various print and electronic media outlets throughout the state. Grant notification will be published via the DCAE Office of Communications in a formal press release, a posting on the DCAE website or social media outlets, and other means of available communication.

Communications regarding grant availability will be sent to agencies that serve Corrections and English Language Learner populations. The DCAE will offer technical assistance grant writing workshops and maintain a question-and-answer document on the RFP website. Both the workshops and the question-and-answer document will provide useful information pertaining to the grant procurement process and be accessible to any interested party.

Questions in the RFP are structured to allow applicants the opportunity to respond to their capacity and readiness to meet the 13 Considerations for Funding and other expectations as outlined in WIOA statutes and regulations. The RFP identifies each of the considerations and specifies probing questions to generate a detailed narrative.

Applicants are evaluated on their ability to meet literacy needs of the area, their ability to comply with WIOA expectations, and the provider's past performance in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals. Decisions about course offerings are made depending on local needs.

In the grant and contract awarding process, the DCAE shall utilize the 13 Considerations for Funding, identified in Section 231(e), to be included in the evaluation and selection process. Some of the factors considered include the ability of the eligible provider to meet the literacy needs of the area, the ability to comply with WIOA expectations, the demonstrated effectiveness and past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals, and the overall qualifications and expertise of the provider's personnel. In addition, Florida also requires eligible providers to incorporate integrated education and training services, which provide adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation and occupational cluster for educational and career advancement.

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA) Adult General Education Programs and Courses

DCAE reviews the standards for each course annually and submits updated courses to the State Board of Education for approval. The program and course numbers are identified in the state Course Code Directory and Data Dictionaries to report enrollment and educational gains accurately. If significant modifications are needed, the recommendations are outlined in a change document and posted on the FDOE website notifying stakeholders of changes to standards or courses.

Each course framework identifies content standards to be used by programs for the local curriculum development process, including the following strands: civic literacy, financial literacy, and basic technology literacy skills. Adult education course standards provide guidance for instructors in teaching adult basic education classes. The standards inform what should be taught in the classroom.

Professional development is provided through local face-to-face workshops and webinars to assist with the implementation of these standards. The curriculum frameworks are available at http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu.

Figure 8.01
Adult General Education Programs and Courses

Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education Programs and Courses	
Adult Basic Education Program	Courses in this program are designed for students to obtain a level of educational instruction intended to improve the employability of the state's workforce through instruction in mathematics, reading, language, and workforce preparation skills at grade level equivalency of 0-8.9. These courses are based on the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education.
Adult High School Program	This program is designed for students to receive high school credit in one or more courses leading to a standard high school diploma. Students obtain credits upon completion of courses and passing state-mandated assessments necessary to qualify for a high school diploma. Except as provided elsewhere in law (Section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes), graduation requirements for adults are the same as those for secondary students.
GED® Preparation Program	This program prepares adults to successfully complete the four subject area tests leading to the award of a State of Florida High School Diploma. The four courses included are Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. These courses are aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards.
GED® Integrated Course	This comprehensive course includes coursework in the following: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. This course was developed for students with simultaneous enrollment in the GED® Preparation program and a career and technical certificate program.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program	
Adult ESOL Course	The adult ESOL course is designed to improve the employability of adults seeking to enter the state's workforce by acquiring communication skills and cultural competencies that enhance their ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English. College and career readiness standards are included in the ESOL advanced level 6.
English Literacy for Career and Technical Education (ELCATE) Course	This course is designed for ESOL students who aim to enroll in a career and technical program. The course helps prepare students for a successful transition to and completion of career and technical education.

Integrated Education and Training (IET) Program	
Integrated Education and Training (IET)	The Integrated courses in mathematics, reading, and language provide access to ABE standards through an integrated, concurrent, and contextualized approach to instruction utilizing a single set of learning objectives. Adult education and literacy activities are provided with workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for educational and career advancement.

Additional Adult Education Courses: Not Supported with Federal Funds and Not Reported for National Reporting System (NRS) Purposes	
Adult ESOL College and Career Readiness Course	The purpose of this course is to improve advanced ESOL students' abilities to communicate in English, allowing them to acquire secondary-level English language skills. College and career readiness standards are integrated into this course with the intention of a successful transition to and completion of postsecondary education.
Adult ESOL Literacy Skills Course	The purpose of this course is to provide English language and literacy instruction for English language learning adults whose first language is not English and who are non-literate or semi-literate in their home language, enhancing their ability to communicate in English.
Applied Academics for Adult Education Course	This course is designed for students who test at the equivalent of 9th grade and above but lack the required level of basic skills to complete the CTE program in which they are enrolled. Students may or may not have earned a high school diploma. These courses are updated annually to align with the secondary (9-12) college and career readiness standards.

Workforce Preparation Activities

Workforce preparation activities include activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills.

For example, career planning and exploration, technology (digital literacy), and computer science education are all included in the adult education curriculum frameworks. In coordination with advisory groups for ABE, ESOL, and ASE programs, additional standards in employability skills will be integrated into the adult education courses to ensure maximum alignment to the future of work and the demands of the 21st-century economy.

Moreover, DCAE will continue to encourage Adult Education providers to incorporate entrepreneurship skills training in their programs. DCAE supports robust co-curricular engagement around business incubation and acceleration for its adult population, particularly for those adult participants of low socioeconomic status. Emphasis will be placed on working with core partners, such as CareerSource Florida, to identify and secure business support and input into improving our current adult education frameworks and co-curricular initiatives. ABE Standards are based on the United States Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education's Framework for Employability Skills and additional resources.

DCAE submits all updated courses annually to the State Board of Education for approval. ABE, ESOL, and GED® preparation courses align with Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards. The learning objectives of the B.E.S.T standards represent an application of skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that prepare students for success in career and postsecondary education.

DCAE will also provide on-site skill-based learning experiences with eligible partners and community economic development agencies. In partnership with CareerSource Florida, area educational agencies, and Florida College System (FCS) institutions, DCAE will work to develop a plan to enroll eligible adult education participants in targeted Career Pathway courses and information sessions and increase opportunities for enrollment in Integrated Education and Training programs that align to a postsecondary credential or degree program.

Additionally, DCAE will continue to collaborate with CareerSource Florida to identify local workforce needs and opportunities for businesses to connect with students. DCAE will continue enrolling eligible participants in apprenticeship programs, developing additional integrated education and training programs, and formalizing other in-demand work-based learning opportunities leading to credentials of value. DCAE will provide leadership for local providers in connecting them to CareerSource Florida boards to identify regional needs and develop targeted instructional programs to meet workforce needs.

Lastly, WIOA requires the submission of "infrastructure agreements" between local AEFLA recipients and CareerSource Florida boards to identify shared costs. As part of the AEFLA grant application process, DCAE requires each provider to submit integrated infrastructure agreements to ensure all are working with local partners to meet academic and workforce needs. Working with the same partners, state government officials, and the State Board of Education, DCAE has created a communication campaign consisting of webinars, improved website capabilities, and a more comprehensive plan around a new media marketing for adult education – all of which is available through AEFLA state leadership funds.

Integrated Education and Training

DCAE promotes the planning, development, and implementation of an Integrated Education and Training (IET) service approach that provides concurrent and contextualized adult education and literacy activities combined with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or career cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

The IET service approach provides all levels of adult education students the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to:

- Transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs.
- Obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency.
- Exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

All IET programs must include the following three components:

- Adult education and literacy activities (§463.30).
- Workforce preparation activities (§463.34.
- Workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, which can be any one of the training services defined in section 134(c)(3)(D) of WIOA.

All services must include the following to meet the "integrated" requirement of IET,:

- Adult education and literacy activities run concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.
- Activities are of sufficient intensity and quality and based on the most rigorous research available, particularly with respect to improving reading, writing, mathematics, and English proficiency of eligible individuals.
- Activities and training occur simultaneously.
- Activities and training use occupational-relevant instructional materials.

The integrated education and training program must have a single set of learning objectives that identifies specific adult education content, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training competencies, and the program activities must function cooperatively.

DCAE has provided ample professional development to support the success of IET programs. Professional development is available through various means such as conferences, webinars, and local training. Local education providers must develop and implement local IET programs as outlined in the state plan and specify the required components within the grant proposals and/or applications.

Finally, Florida has authorized a new Open Door Grant program to help support and fund Integrated Education and Training programs. FDOE will continue to provide support as we expand this initiative.

Development of Career Pathways

WIOA, Section 3(7) defines a career pathway as a "combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services" that:

- Aligns to the skills industry needs, both regionally and statewide.
- Prepares individuals to be successful in a full range of secondary and postsecondary programs and training opportunities, including apprenticeships.
- Includes counseling mechanisms around the individual's passion and place in the workforce.
- Organizes the adult education experience in a way that "accelerates" the educational and career advancement of the person in each occupational cluster.

Career pathway strategies aim to leverage education, workforce development, and social service support to help residents obtain the skills they need to find employment and advance in their careers. Florida is proposing, therefore, to develop a more robust career pathways system for adult education – i.e., one that not only coordinates residents and adult education learners with career resources but attempts to provide structured work-based learning opportunities, targeted training and other services to accelerate the educational and career advancement of the individual, and an opportunity for the acquisition of at least one micro-credential of value and one postsecondary credential. By aligning programming, funding, and services within and across the community, providers assist individuals in transitioning into and out of education and training programs and employment.

The state intends to promote the development of career pathways by means of the following five strategic priorities:[1]

1. Increase interagency and intra-agency partnerships by coordinating activities among adult education providers, colleges, career and technical institutions, workforce development, businesses, and other entities to implement a comprehensive local/regional career pathways system.
2. Increase industry engagement in informing and supporting adult education courses and activities to target occupations and the skills, training, and credentials required for target occupations.
3. Improve and focus professional development opportunities to support staff in delivering education and training services.
4. Develop and encourage local career pathway policies and guidance for conducting assessments, delivering instruction, providing advising, and increasing support services.
5. Improve statewide and regional communication around career pathway opportunities through ongoing professional development opportunities for providers.

To implement these strategic priorities, the state intends to review individual adult education providers' performance and identify regions without robust career pathway agreements and work with area stakeholders to develop them. It also intends to develop a plan to provide individualized assistance to address specific deficiencies in adult education program functions related to preparing clients for further education, training, or employment.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE)
DCAE provides unique educational opportunities to adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries. These educational opportunities enable adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. The IELCE programs, supported by section 243 of WIOA funding, are delivered in combination with IET. Professional development is provided to practitioners on developing and delivering an integrated and contextualized curriculum.

Special Rule
Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities to support and provide programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

1 Cotner, H. "The Career Pathways Planner: A Guide for Adult Education State Leaders to Promote Local Career Pathways Sys- tems" (December 2016), available at https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/topic/mpf/TACP_Planner_for_OCTAE_ADA.PDF.

(c) Corrections Education and Other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

As specified in section 225 of WIOA, the DCAE spends no more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of the state grant allotted to local programs for correctional education activities. Funding allocations are determined as part of the planning process for the implementation of WIOA. Priority is given to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Adult education programs offered in correctional institutions include ABE, GED® Preparation, and ESOL. Individuals participate in career exploration and planning activities to develop a career and education plan based on career goals.

Florida is committed to providing high-quality educational programs in state correctional settings and intends to continue its partnership with the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) to ensure inmates have access to Adult Education and CTE programs to prepare them for current and emerging employment in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations. These instructional services are critical to ensuring the ease of transition for incarcerated individuals and ideally reduce the rate of recidivism upon release.

(d) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

The term "Integrated English literacy and civics education (IELCE)" means education services that are provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees or credentials in their native countries, to enable such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. English language learners holding a secondary or post-secondary degree or credential in their native country may enroll in an adult ESOL/IELCE program to improve literacy and English language acquisition through contextualized English language instruction with authentic materials and lexical items. Examples of profession-specific curriculum for participants with foreign degrees or credentials include English for Engineers or Medical English. The use of a specialized curriculum in IELCE serves to help participants acquire critical English language skills necessary to accelerate employment in the same field in which they hold a foreign degree or credential. IELCE-eligible providers engage in recruiting, enrolling, and providing ongoing wraparound support for English language learners in IELCE programs. Specifically, IELCE eligible providers support skilled individuals in evaluating foreign credentials, obtaining professional licenses, and identifying career clusters and related pathways that match their professional and career goals.

IELCE funds for local and state leadership activities are distributed through multi-year competitive and continuation local grants. The IELCE competitive grant process was conducted in June 2021 for the years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Only sites with established ESOL and ELCATE programs are eligible to apply for IELCE funds. Each program that receives funding will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards will be integrated into curriculum frameworks, including career information and workforce preparation activities in addition to the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education. Adult educators can participate in IELCE regional workshops, conferences, and webinars sponsored in collaboration with the state leadership grant awardees. Emphasis will be placed on education for democratic citizenship and the instruction of those foundational concepts and beliefs essential to successful self-rule. Emphasis will be placed on developing innovative and targeted IELCE workshops and sessions around education for democratic citizenship, entrepreneurship education, and how adult education can be a mechanism for engagement and economic and social mobility for Florida's residents.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training. Eligible providers must demonstrate their program delivery model in the grant application to ensure integrated education and training activities are provided directly or through collaboration with identified partners or other community-based organizations.

Providers will integrate IELCE into the local workforce system by partnering with LWDBs, career and technical education centers, and local colleges to identify workforce needs and implement systems that facilitate the successful transition into key areas and sectors as outlined through local MOUs. The ongoing partnership between eligible providers and local workforce providers is critical in developing a strong workforce.

(e) State Leadership

The state uses leadership funds, no more than 12.5 percent of the total grant, to execute the four mandatory leadership activities and other state leadership activities described in section 223 of WIOA.

The four mandatory leadership activities are:

1. Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with core partners and CareerSource Florida partners. Each eligible agency shall use funds to align adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to develop career pathways systems for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

Through leadership grants, DCAE supports local career pathways design, agreements, activities, and implementation. Given that a functional career pathways system consists of multiple agencies, with differing missions but all sharing a common goal of preparing individuals for career and life success, DCAE will focus on improving the collaboration of local providers and core partners. DCAE will also work to create more substantial opportunities for adults with disabilities to participate in career pathway services and IET by providing professional development through leadership funds. Best practices will be identified and shared throughout the state to support continuous program improvement. These best practices will be shared through regional workshops, conferences, online training materials, and webinars.

Additionally, through advisory committee meetings and targeted training with experts in the field, DCAE will collaborate to establish career pathways and be committed to pathways development. In addition, DCAE will continue to work with and utilize the expertise of CareerSource Florida, the State College System, school districts, and business and industry leaders to ensure adult education students are provided up-to-date information on career pathways. This will occur through local advisory and counseling services. DCAE will provide professional development opportunities for administrators, advisors, and counselors during regional workshops, conferences, and webinars. Online training materials will also be developed through our leadership funds.

Engaging the field is critical to building and sustaining career pathways systems. State leadership grant recipients are encouraged to provide additional professional development on strategic engagement practices such as:

- Development of a comprehensive intake process involving the students' development of a career and education plan.
- Technical assistance for agencies on developing a vision of comprehensive and coordinated services.
- Recruiting a diverse range of students who would benefit from the career pathways model.
- Creating a vision of the types and sequences of career pathways services and credentialing programs that an adult education provider can deliver.

2. The establishment or operation of high-quality professional development programs (section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA):
DCAE supports professional development with leadership grants to the Adult and Community Educators (ACE) of Florida Foundation, the Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC), and the Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators (IPDAE).

The state leadership recipients provide face-to-face and online professional development opportunities for adult education practitioners and various resources are available at http://aceofflorida.org, http://floridaliteracy.org, and http://floridaipdae.org.

Resources include electronic documents, toolkits, lessons, videos, workshops, webinars, virtual training, online training modules, newsletters, and consistent communication outreach through an email contact database. The state leadership groups combine subject matter experts, interactivity engagements, planning/coordination, and a technology platform to disseminate information required for implementing adult education programs. In addition, the state leadership groups provide methods to measure and assess the involvement and effectiveness of adult education programs through data reports, evaluations, and surveys.

Priorities for establishing professional development are identified through statewide needs assessment surveys, advisory committee meetings, conferences, and administrator meetings. These identified priorities, which are funded through this state plan, include research-based reading strategies, integrated education and training, career pathways systems, contextualized instruction, math training for ABE and GED® preparation, implementation of college and career readiness standards in adult education and ESOL, and training specific to community-based and volunteer tutoring services.

3. Technical Assistance:
DCAE provides technical assistance on programmatic and data collection and reporting processes to providers through email, webinars, telephone inquiries, and site visits. Technical assistance papers on assessment and adult high school policies receive annual updates and are posted on the Florida Department of Education website.

The Adult Education Assessment Technical Assistance Paper and the Adult High School Technical Assistance Guide are available at http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/technical-assistance-papers.stml.

Current practices with one-stop career centers and provider partnerships include referrals, locating teachers and classrooms at the local CareerSource Florida centers, or providing space for the CareerSource Florida activities in the adult education center. As part of the RFA and RFP process, eligible recipients submit their applications for review to the local workforce boards to ensure alignment with their plans.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation:
In accordance with section 223, Florida uses AEFLA State Leadership funds to monitor and evaluate the quality of and the improvement in adult education and literacy activities utilizing various means of assessment in its annual and ongoing evaluation process, including site monitoring visits, desk monitoring, program improvement processes, and performance and financial audits. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

DCAE implements a Quality Assurance System that analyzes student performance, provides for financial accountability, evaluates program quality, and establishes regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules. The monitoring component of the Quality Assurance System uses risk assessment, which is a process used to evaluate variables with federal adult education grants associated with workforce education grants and assign a rating for the level of risk to the FDOE and DCAE associated with each provider. In order to complete a risk assessment, certain risk factors have been identified which may affect the level of risk for each agency. A risk matrix is completed for each provider. DCAE conducts an annual risk assessment by the quality assurance team to determine the monitoring strategy appropriate for each provider. A range of monitoring strategies includes conference calls, improvement plans, desk-top self-assessments, grant reviews, etc., with the more comprehensive strategy, such as an onsite visit, designated for providers deemed to be at higher risk.

To improve the quality of a program, if non-compliance finding(s) are identified, a corrective action plan will be implemented. The corrective action plan must identify the finding(s) and the provider's specific strategies to ensure the finding(s) have been resolved.

The state provides a leadership grant to the Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) to support state or regional networks of literacy resource centers. FLC serves as the designated state literacy resource center. A literacy center is a community-based resource that provides literacy services for adult education students. The resources may include printed educational materials, tutor services, and health and financial literacy skills training. Professional development is customized for tutors and volunteers and is available online and in person. The coalition provides leadership support to literacy centers operating throughout

the state. An annual conference provides an opportunity to share best practices with adult education practitioners, teachers, volunteers, tutors, and students. A resource center is also available with a toll-free number for student referrals and information requests. DCAE monitors the performance of FLC by attending the annual conference, participating in online tutor trainings, and processing quarterly reports.

(f) Assessing Quality

Assessing Quality of Professional Development
Participants are surveyed after all workshops, conference presentations, and webinars to evaluate and provide feedback on the activity or event. In regional workshops, changes are made to future workshops based on feedback from participants. Programs review student data to determine if training impacted student outcomes and to determine areas where additional training may be needed. The annual training plan includes state priorities, input from surveys about training needs, and advice from a statewide professional development advisory committee. Survey results are reviewed with the professional development advisory committee to determine how training is best delivered, face-to-face or through online webinars. Workshops conducted on college and career readiness are formatted for online courses, including a post-test to determine if learning objectives were met.

The IPDAE website provides methods to measure and assess the involvement and effectiveness of online modules, webinars, and regional workshops through data reports, evaluations, and surveys. All IPDAE workshop and webinar registrations are online. Once an individual creates an account in the IPDAE portal, a record is kept of all professional development activities he or she attends. This record is available by county so administrators can review and make local professional development decisions. In addition, DCAE reviews comments submitted by participants.

Assessment of Programs Receiving Federal Grant Funds
DCAE uses various methods of assessment during the annual and ongoing program evaluation process. This evaluation includes site monitoring visits, desk monitoring, program improvement processes, and performance and financial compliance reviews. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

DCAE implements a Quality Assurance System that ensures student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations, state statutes and rules, and the provisions of an approved grant award.

The monitoring component of the Quality Assurance System is risk-based. Risk assessment is used to evaluate variables associated with workforce education grants and assign a rating for levels of risk to the FDOE and DCAE associated with each provider. In completing a risk assessment, certain factors are identified which may affect levels of risk for each agency. A risk matrix is completed for each provider.

To determine the monitoring strategies appropriate for each provider, an annual risk assessment is conducted by the quality assurance team. A range of monitoring strategies includes conference calls, improvement plans, desktop self-assessments, and grant reviews. Additional comprehensive strategies are implemented, such as onsite visits, for providers deemed to be at higher risk.

Program Accountability

DCAE established minimum benchmarks for eligible providers. Each eligible provider is required to demonstrate the ability to meet the benchmarks in the initial grant application and during the grant period. DCAE developed an accountability system to measure student enrollment, progression, and performance. These requirements apply to all three competitive grant-funded programs: adult general education, integrated English literacy and civics education, and corrections education.

The accountability system established by DCAE requires an eligible provider to demonstrate a program's size, scope, and quality. The system requires an applicant to establish a minimum level of instructional service necessary to improve literacy and workforce preparation in the lives of working-age adults who lack basic literacy skills, a diploma, and/or English language skills. The DCAE requires providers to establish minimum enrollment targets and meet the enrollment targets during the grant period. Periodic verification is conducted to determine agency progress on meeting its enrollment target. Providers must offer instruction for a minimum of 10 hours per week for at least 32 weeks for each WIOA-eligible program offered by the agency. Periodic updates are required according to a set program schedule. DCAE establishes a maximum finding level an applicant may request based upon the number of students served.

Program accountability is measured through the following WIOA outcome measures:

- Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) are reported to DCAE during regularly established survey windows as required by the National Reporting System. This is based on the lowest functioning level, the participant earned at least one eligible literacy completion point, earned a diploma or GED®, or exited and enrolled in postsecondary career and technical education by the end of the reporting year.
- Credential Attainment Rate measures student attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or enrollment in postsecondary education or career training within one year of exit.
- Employment Rate (second quarter after exit) measures the number of exiters during the reporting period who are employed during the second quarter after exit, divided by the number of exiters during the reporting period.
- Median Earnings (second quarter after exit), for all exiters in a core program, is the report of the wage that is at the midpoint between the highest and lowest wage earned in the second quarter after exit.
- Employment Rate (fourth quarter) measures the number of exiters during the reporting period who are employed during the fourth quarter after exit, divided by the number of exiters during the reporting period.

In the spring of 2022, DCAE negotiated state performance with OCTAE, and all local providers are expected to meet the state target for each measure to develop a more rigorous accountability system. Local provider performance will be analyzed, and reports will be provided to share information.

Program Improvement Plans
DCAE conducts annual performance evaluations of local providers' performance on the WIOA measures discussed above through a data-driven accountability system for adult education programs. If a program does not meet state performance targets, a Program Improvement Plan is required. DCAE staff reviews the improvement plans to identify opportunities to improve local practices. DCAE provides support such as targeted professional development, teacher training, and site visits.

In addition, DCAE takes the following actions to continually improve the quality of the programs:

- **New Director Training**
  The annual new director training provides new directors with information such as federal and state guidelines, data collection, and NRS reporting, and resources needed to administer their programs.
- **TABE and CASAS Training/Trainers**
  Through ongoing training, a network of trained professionals ensures the uniform administration and reporting of assessments used for determining federal-level gains.
- **Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training**
  Data reporting and program improvement training provides training on the fundamentals of the NRS. Topics include monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.
- **Technical Assistance**
  Adult education calls and webinars are available to inform adult educators of program changes to report announcements and provide opportunities for practitioners to ask questions of the DCAE staff. DCAE updates and posts technical assistance papers on the FDOE website.
- **Teacher Training**
  Teacher training provides information and resources to support instruction in ABE, ESOL, GED® preparation, college and career readiness, career awareness and planning, career pathways, reading and math instructional strategies, and adults with disabilities.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
1.	The plan is submitted by the state agency that is eligible to submit the plan.
2.	The state agency has authority under state law to perform the functions of the state under the program.
3.	The state may legally carry out each provision of the plan.
4.	All provisions of the plan are consistent with state law.
5.	A state officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under the plan.
6.	The state officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan.
7.	The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan.
8.	The plan is the basis for state operation and administration of the program.

The State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The eligible agency expends funds appropriated to carry out Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement and not supplant requirements).
2.	The eligible agency will ensure at least one eligible provider is serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA.
3.	The eligible agency will not use any funds available under Title II of WIOA for supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA.
4.	Using funds made available under Title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.
5.	The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. ss. 8301-8303).

AEFLA Section 427 of GEPA Response

The Division of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) in the Florida Department of Education is charged with administering WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy and actively demonstrates commitment to Section 427 of GEPA through utilization of the following strategies:

Funding of Eligible Recipients

During 2023-2024, eligible applicants will compete to provide AEFLA instructional services. As part of the competitive process, the state will consider the ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities, in accordance with WIOA Section 231(e)(2). As such, applicants are required to describe the policies adopted by the eligible provider to accommodate students and staff with disabilities, including learning disabilities, as defined in the American Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102) and WIOA Section 3(25). Additionally, applicants are required to describe how the program will identify and provide services to students with physical, emotional, mental and learning disabilities. Responses are weighted and external evaluators will assign points based on the comprehensive nature of the responses.

Eligible recipients are required (annually) to provide a concise description of the process to ensure equitable access to, and participation of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs in accordance with the guidance provided at http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.pdf and sign an assurance statement as well.

Quality Assurance and Compliance

DCAE administers quality assurance and compliance through established on-site and desk monitoring protocols. Compliance with Section 427 of GEPA is embedded in its policies and procedures (http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/compliance/). The purpose of monitoring is to identify the specific areas in which a provider is in compliance or non-compliance with federal law and regulations, state statutes and rules Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), Federal Register Part III, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) 2 CFR Chapter I, Chapter II, Part 200, et al. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; Final Rule. The timely identification of non-compliance provides a framework to make changes to result in programs becoming more efficient and effective. A comprehensive and multi-dimensional Quality Assurance and Compliance System is a foundation for continuous improvement of services and systems both internally and externally. Our commitment to excellence supports accountability, collaboration, targeted technical assistance, continuous improvement and positive systemic change.

The Quality Assurance section of the Bureau of Grants Administration and Compliance is responsible for the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive quality assurance system, including monitoring. The role of the Quality Assurance and Compliance System is to ensure financial accountability, program quality and regulatory compliance. As stewards of federal and state funds, it is incumbent upon the DCAE to regularly monitor the use of federal funds and regulatory compliance of providers, including fidelity of Section 427 of GEPA implementation.

Evidence-Based Professional Development
DCAE implements with fidelity its commitment to Section 427 of GEPA through its statewide professional development offerings, which consistently provide research-based instructional strategies for serving adults with disabilities in AEFLA funded instructional programs. The Institute for Professional Development for Adult Educators (IPDAE), currently administered by Indian River State College, Adult and Community Educators (ACE) of Florida professional organization and the Florida Literacy Coalition are the approved statewide professional development providers. Regional workshops and webinars are conducted on professional development priorities identified by the State advisory committees for ESOL, ABE and GED/ Adult High School, results from statewide needs assessments, and the DCAE staff. Priorities identified for implementing this state plan are research-based reading strategies, integrated education and training, math training for ABE and GED® preparation and implementation of college and career readiness standards in adult education and ESOL and 504 plan development.

- SF424B – Assurances – Non-Construction Programs
  http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/ appforms/appforms.html
- Grants.gov – Certification Regarding Lobbying
  http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ appforms.html
- SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)
  http://www2.ed.gov/

Florida Department of Education

Richard Corcoran
Richard Corcoran (Feb 8, 2022 20:02 EST)

DATE: Feb 8, 2022

Commissioner Richard Corcoran

IX. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Input of State Rehabilitation Council
The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) is pleased to be a strategic partner with VR. The FRC promotes high standards and expectations for every area of service delivery by recommending best practices in policies using data-driven recommendations and by sharing each council member's unique perspective from the constituency they represent.

The FRC is equally concerned, as is the agency, with staff retention and turnover. The current high level of turnover has serious and significant impacts on the clients being served as well as staff. For Florida to have a state-of-the-art program of services for individuals with disabilities, actions should be taken to, at minimum, achieve parity with national salaries. Action is needed by policymakers who can approve budgetary authority so that VR can be competitive in recruiting, hiring and retaining staff.

The FRC appreciates the vision that leadership continues to bring to the agency. The FRC is ready to meet the challenges with VR as a partner.

State Rehabilitation Council Recommendations
The FRC offers the following robust recommendations to enhance service delivery and career achievement by individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation 1. Deaf and Hard of Hearing
FRC sees a continued focus and improvement in delivery of services and infrastructure to support customers who are deaf and hard of hearing. FRC would like to receive continued updates on progress and track progress over the next two years.

Agency Response:
VR agrees with this assessment and recommendation and will continue to report on progress.

In recent years, VR has:

- Elevated Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind services to a specific unit, rather than being a part of the general VR policy team.
- Moved Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind business unit to the Bureau of Field Services to strengthen the connection between the technical assistance and coordination services the unit provides and the field staff who deliver the services, thus increasing the capacity of all field staff.

- Recognizing that one of the main barriers to serving individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind, is the lack of qualified sign language interpreters, and the difficulty in retaining staff interpreters, VR maintains a contract with ServiceSource to increase the number of staff interpreters that are available. This contract initially ad ded nine interpreters in geographic areas of need identified by field staff. Since implementation, the number of interpreters has increased to 11, in recognition of the need across the state. VR staff members who are qualified interpreters are eligible for salary enhancements during the hiring process or if they obtain credentials while employed by VR. To the extent this has not been sufficient, the ServiceSource contract continues to expand capacity further.

Recommendation 2. Counselor Recruitment, Retention
The FRC strongly recommends consideration of additional, immediate pay increases/incentives and non-pay incentives to meet or exceed the national average for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors currently hired or working to attain the credential and upon recruitment of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. The FRC believes this is a critical need to stabilize the VR workforce.

Agency Response:
VR agrees with all aspects of the Counselor Recruitment and Retention recommendation and remains committed to stabilizing the VR workforce.

Recommendation 3. Transition

- Continue to promote early contact and assistance to all students with disabilities under an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan.
- Continue to expand and offer career paths to include vocational exploration, technical training, apprenticeships and post-secondary options for transition students.
- Continue to emphasize peer mentoring in Florida, especially to underserved groups who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. Assure that there is a network of proficient providers and supports for those providers, including those working with individuals who are deaf.
- FRC encourages VR to create collaborative partnerships with state and community colleges to share resources that create access points to help potential and current customers to find and access resources.

Agency Response:

- VR has many pilot projects and initiatives anticipated to create additional training and employment opportunities for students and youth. There are 35 public school districts and 15 charter schools currently participating in the Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) as a provider for VR.
- The current caseload of VR customers is 51% youth aged 14-21. This demonstrates the intentional focus the agency has on the youth population.

Recommendation 4. Job Placement Strategies

- Continue to analyze and identify any trends in services provided under the rehabilitation engineering service category by service type and VR area.
- Continue strengthening efforts with business leaders to improve employment opportunities and meaningful careers, including increasing partnerships with local Chambers of Commerce.
- Remain focused on customer strengths and develop tools to communicate effectively and succinctly to potential employers.
- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the Abilities Work Help Desk and provide regular reports to the FRC.
- Further build capacity for job customization and Innovation and Expansion projects to include unserved and underserved populations.
- Evaluate self-employment services across the board to include the evaluation of the Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultant model. Consider ways to streamline and expedite the provision of self-employment services.
- Monitor and support the new partnership between the Able Trust and Small Business Development Centers to enhance engagement with individuals with disabilities.

Agency Response:

- VR will continue to provide rehab technology service data to FRC and plans to provide regular updates.
- VR will continue to evaluate self-employment services and the current Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultant model.
- VR has made great effort to increase the number of providers for Discovery, Customized Employment. VR will continue to provide frequent training to increase the number of providers certified to offer these services.
- VR will continue to strengthen efforts with business leaders to improve employment opportunities and meaningful careers, including increasing partnerships with local Chambers of Commerce.

Recommendation 5. Rights and Conflict Resolution

- Continue to promote advocacy and a Disability Rights curriculum for clients, staff and providers as a core principle. Collaborative discussions enhance informed choices.
- Continue to implement strategies to improve satisfaction survey results on client knowledge of all levels of rights to resolve any difficulties with VR.
- Create an award to empower VR staff by recognizing their innovative use of conflict resolution.
- Make sure all VR staff and clients are aware of their options and of the services of Disability Rights Florida, the Client Assistance Program and the VR Ombudsman's Office provided through increased collaboration and additional engagement.

Agency Response:
VR agrees with FRC in the importance of Rights education and is included in training required of all VR staff. VR requires staff to complete training on confidentiality procedures, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Client Assistance Program, and Disability Etiquette and Auxiliary Aids. VR implemented an on-demand, virtual orientation process to ensure focus on customer rights and responsibilities within the rehabilitation process. VR also included a removable wallet card with the Disability Rights Florida, Client Assistance Program and VR Ombudsman's Office contact information in the VR Handbook of Services.

Recommendation 6. Public Awareness of VR

- In collaboration with the Florida Department of Education, develop and implement rebranding and messaging targeted to businesses and potential customers to promote public awareness of VR.
- Implement an online application system.
- Continue to engage businesses and mandated partners.

Agency Response:

- VR agrees with the recommendation of an accessible, online application process, but at this time, resources are not available for this project. As VR replaces the current case management system with Aware, opportunities for customer portals and other opportunities for streamlining and simplifying access to services are being pursued.
- VR agrees with up-to-date modernization of our marketing tools, including updated brochures and informational packets.

Customer Satisfaction Survey
The FRC is required to review and analyze the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with VR agency functions, rehabilitation services and employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals, including the availability of health and other employment benefits. The FRC and VR contract with Market Decisions to obtain this information. The wealth of data is being used effectively by the FRC and VR to focus on specific areas of excellence for recognition, as well as specific opportunities for improvement.

Annual highlights from the SFY 2019-2020 survey results are below:

VR customers satisfied with Florida's VR program 83%
VR customers satisfied with the services provided by VR 82%
VR customers satisfied with their involvement in their VR experience 85%
VR customers who say VR staff treated them with dignity and respect 94%
VR customers satisfied with their choice of vocational goal 83%
VR customers who say VR staff were helpful in achieving their job goal 91%
VR customers who say the VR services they received helped them become more independent 87%
VR customers who say the VR services they received helped them become more financially independent 80%
VR customers satisfied with what they are doing at their current job 75%
VR customers who would tell their friends with disabilities to go to VR 92%

(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

VR does not request a waiver of statewideness due to the fact all services are available on a statewide basis. Intentional focus has been given to rural areas where limited providers were available. This effort has expanded services to all 67 counties.

(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System

VR maintains agreements with agencies and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. A description of current VR partners and agreements are below.

The Able Trust
The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. The Able Trust assists community organizations throughout the state to help thousands of Floridians with disabilities enter the workforce. They accomplish this by administering grants, as well as supporting educational and public awareness programs. The Able Trust youth programs provide career development and transition to many students with disabilities annually, helping to reduce the dropout rate and prepare young adults for life beyond high school. The Able Trust submits its budget, annual report, audit and any changes to the Articles of Incorporation or by-laws to the Vocational Rehabilitation director annually for review, and VR provides necessary approval, as required.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities
The agreement between the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Agency for Health Care Administration and VR contains a detailed and specific focus on collaborative, planning and funding of Supported Employment services for individuals with the most-significant disabilities. Specifically, the purpose of the agreement is to provide improved competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities. In addition, the agreement seeks to improve interagency communication and increase efficiencies by establishing a data sharing and tracking process that demonstrates the progress of mutual customers served. This should increase the opportunity to provide a seamless transition of services. The agreement includes local strategies and joint obligations for both agencies. The agencies have a common goal of assisting eligible individuals to achieve greater independence through employment. The specific goal of this agreement is to coordinate support and services throughout the state, maintaining maximum customer satisfaction and informed choice. This agreement was updated and executed in Feb. 2021.

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc.
VR and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. agree to share specific information about their customers to optimize service delivery. Both agree to specific procedures that facilitate the delivery of services to their respective and mutual customers. Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology offers an Alternative Financing Program for the purchase of assistive technology to all residents of Florida who have disabilities

Florida Independent Living Council, Inc.
VR coordinates with Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. (FILC) and the Centers for Independent Living throughout the state. Through memoranda of agreement with each of the 16 Centers, VR provides funding, outlines roles and responsibilities and ensures cooperative planning.

Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind
VR and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind agree to cooperate in serving students and customers who are deaf or hard of hearing and in establishing transition meetings. Activities are implemented to increase public awareness of programs serving these customers and to improve transition between the school and local counselors.

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe
The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe, located in southern Georgia, is the recipient of the Federal Section 121 Grant under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. There is not a 121 program in Florida. However, VR and the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe have a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate services for eligible Native Americans with disabilities residing on or near the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe Tama Reservation within a 150-mile radius. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of both groups, including services for joint customers and technical assistance.

Mental Health Program, Florida Department of Children and Families
VR coordinates with the state mental health authority to assist customers who have mental illnesses. One of these is participation on the Florida Assertive Community Treatment Team, a community-based, outreach-oriented method of delivering services to individuals with mental illnesses coordinated by the Mental Health Program. VR provides staff liaisons with many of these teams to help serve this group of customers in a comprehensive manner. VR is an active member of the State Mental Health Planning Council of Florida. The cooperative agreement promotes coordination so that appropriate services can be delivered to maximize customer choice and satisfaction. This agreement is currently being updated to ensure compliance with new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations.

Division of Blind Services (DBS), Florida Department of Education
Both VR and DBS serve individuals with visual impairments. This agreement specifies the roles and responsibilities of each division, including those for individuals with one-eye pathology, bilateral visual impairment, multiple disabilities, and for individuals who are deaf-blind.

Bureau of Exceptional Student Education (BESE), Florida Department of Education; Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Health; Department of Economic Opportunity
The Florida Interagency Agreement for the Transfer of Assistive Technology, signed in 2006, establishes a framework for an efficient transition of technology as individuals with disabilities move through the continuum from educational services to employment. Specifically, the agreement ensures children and youth with disabilities and their families, educators and employers are informed about the continued use and transfer of assistive technology devices. These devices may remain with the person as he or she moves from home to school and to post-school activities to assist in meeting transition needs. The agreement outlines the conditions for coordination, the authority for transfer of property by local education agencies, financial responsibilities and other topics.

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Employment Standards Administration
Both agencies agree to further the common goal of providing VR equal employment opportunities and protecting against discrimination. VR will provide expertise on matters relating to disability issues and employment, cross-referral of individuals with disabilities and will participate in interagency training programs, staff meetings and conferences. Both agencies agree to a coordinated public outreach effort.

Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises, Inc. (PRIDE)
VR uses the services and manufactured items produced in correctional work programs through PRIDE. PRIDE is a Florida corporation that provides these goods and services as a state-use contracting program. A similar product or service of comparable price and quality, found necessary for use by a state agency, may not be purchased from a source other than PRIDE. Contracts between VR and any private vendor require all items be purchased through PRIDE. This is consistent with Section 946.515, Florida Statutes.

Rehabilitation Foundation of Northwest Florida
The purpose of this agreement is to maximize funding of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with physical disabilities residing in northwest Florida. The Foundation contributes $25,000 to VR toward meeting its non-federal funding requirements. In turn, VR will allocate an additional $92,371 in federal funds to match the Foundation's contribution for vocational rehabilitation services in the following northwest Florida counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton.

The intent of these cooperative efforts is to increase the services leading to high quality competitive, integrated employment outcomes that are responsive to the strengths, resources, interests and capabilities of individuals with disabilities residing in northwest Florida. VR agrees to provide quarterly reports of expenditures to the Foundation's Trustees. Each report will include the number of individuals served and a description of services provided under the terms of the agreement.

Employment Networks
One of VR's ongoing objectives for the Ticket to Work Program is to increase the number of partnerships with Employment Networks (Employment and Rehabilitation Service Providers). VR hopes to expand the resources available to customers to meet the current and future levels of demand. It is also the goal of VR to ensure customers have a choice in service providers available within their communities. VR has also implemented an Employment Network Referral Partnership that creates more opportunity to develop partnerships with Employment Networks. The partnership features a transitional approach by assisting Social Security Administration customers in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency through core VR services followed by ongoing support services from employment networks. VR will continue to monitor the Agreement's effectiveness in meeting the previously stated goal.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs
The need to serve Florida veterans who have disabilities led to the development of an agreement between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and VR. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of VR and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It clarifies which agency can provide specific services and includes information regarding shared planning, joint activities and coordination.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

VR entered into a formal Agreement in August 2018, to coordinate transition services with state education officials based on new procedures required for the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It is a state-level agreement, including agencies charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school and going to postsecondary education, training and/or employment, as well as providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities aged 14-21. The educational agencies listed below agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives, collaborate on training and special projects, cooperate in planning and budgeting and generally support any areas of work that are mutually beneficial. The parties to the agreement within the Florida Department of Education are:

- Division of Public Schools
- Bureau of Exceptional Student Education
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Division of Blind Services

This formal interagency agreement serves as a transition services model for improved collaboration, communication, coordination and cooperation among local education agencies and local offices of VR and DBS. Although they aren't a formal member of the agreement, VR also collaborates with the Division of Career and Adult Education to improve transitions to WIOA partner programs.

This agreement informs the DBS, State and Local Education Agencies that they must assure they do not enter into an arrangement with an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act for the purpose of operating a program under which a student or youth with a disability is compensated for work at subminimum wage, in accordance with Section 511 of 34 CFR § 397.31. In addition, employers holding a 14(c) special wage certificate are prohibited from employing a youth with a disability 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage, unless the individual has received documentation from DBS or VR verifying their completion of the required activities, which includes participation in Pre-ETS or Transition Services under IDEA, application for VR services and completion of the Career Counseling Information and Referral Service. VR ensures compliance through policy and standard operating procedures that require VR staff to record the completion of these activities and supply this documentation to the youth or student with a disability who is seeking subminimum wage employment.

In addition to the State Education Agency Agreement, in collaboration with DBS and BESE, VR has implemented the Local Education Agency Agreement template. This template operationalizes the SEA Agreement at the local level to improve the communication, collaboration and coordination of services to students among local VR Offices, DBS and schools.

VR has increased staffing to two dedicated state-level administrators for VR Transition Youth programs and Pre-ETS. The administrators serve as liaisons to all 67 school districts and a Deaf and Hard of Hearing administrator provides additional liaison support for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

Administrators coordinate and plan for effective transition services delivery with VR staff and external stakeholders statewide. The VR Transition Youth program is responsible for training internal employees and making presentations about VR transition services at conferences statewide to increase understanding and awareness of the agency's role in assisting eligible students with disabilities.

The VR Transition Youth program provides transition and Pre-ETS-related technical assistance to the Florida Rehabilitation Council. Both administrators serve jointly as a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee and work closely with the regional representatives of Project 10: the Transition Education Network. Project 10 is funded through a grant from BESE to the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. Project 10 helps Florida school districts and stakeholders increase their ability to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 helps implement secondary transition services, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and outcomes. VR counselors serving transition students participate in each area's local interagency councils. The interagency councils are a collaborative effort between VR and Department of Education partners, public high schools, adult service agencies, workforce programs, parents, students, advocates and employers working together to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities.

The VR Director or designee serves on the State Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Education of Exceptional Students. This committee is administered by BESE. The SAC includes parents of children with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, educators and administrators from secondary and postsecondary institutions as well as foster care and juvenile justice representatives. The SAC also includes representatives of various state agencies that provide transition and other services to children, youth and young adults with disabilities. The committee advises the state education agency on what children with disabilities need and helps them develop corrective action plans to address findings in related federal monitoring reports. The committee also

helps the state education agency develop evaluations and policies, implement policies and report data. The committee may comment publicly on rules and regulations proposed by the state relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

VR services delivered under WIOA do not supplant, reduce, or change the school district's responsibility to deliver a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students served under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. VR services supplement, but do not supplant services delivered through the school districts.

The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as Project SEARCH and Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They also provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and community- based work experiences, often lead to successful employment. For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials, which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provides funding for participants to receive needed services and other supports. This shared support helps partner programs serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities.

Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities

VR encourages early referral and application for transition students during high school so that they may receive Pre-ETS and better coordinate with local education agencies. Pre-ETS includes Career Exploration and Counseling, Work Readiness Training, Work Experiences, Postsecondary Educational Counseling and Self-Advocacy Training, including Peer Mentoring. Students with disabilities may receive Pre-ETS through the WIOA potentially eligible process without the need to apply or to be determined eligible. Students who require additional VR services or supports may still obtain Pre-ETS while applying to VR. VR brochures describe how students and families can access Pre-ETS or other VR services beginning at age 14 and beyond. Students with disabilities who are at high risk for dropping out of school may be referred to VR. This early referral process allows the counselor to develop a rapport with the transition student and family, explore vocational options and comparable benefits and begin necessary guidance and counseling.

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), Supported Employment IPE, Individual Support Plan and/or Care Coordination Plans are completed or updated as early as possible prior to graduation or leaving school to allow a seamless transition to a student's desired postsecondary outcome.

VR counselors, with assistance from VR technicians, serve as representatives to work with public and private high school across the state. They provide outreach and vocational rehabilitation orientation services to students, school officials, parents and others involved in transition services. The counselor works collaboratively with key stakeholders and family to develop the Individualized Plan for Employment prior to completion of secondary school to assist with a seamless transition to post-secondary training, education or job placement.

(2) Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

(A) Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

Employment First

As an employment leader, VR strongly encourages partner agencies, organizations and employers to promote competitive integrated employment in the community as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities who are employed experience enhanced independence and quality of life. They are also contributing to the rich diversity of the workforce so the entire community benefits. VR was a founding partner in the State's Employment First movement. As a result of the partners working together, The Employment First Act is now in statute. This identifies the responsibilities of the partners to improve and increase employment opportunities for all Florida's citizens. The Employment First Committee submits a report to the Governor annually, describing the coordination of participating agencies to advance the Employment First philosophy as a way of work throughout Florida.

Technical Assistance and Consultation

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to have written agreements with VR and DBS, including other agencies that offer supports or services during student transition. The agreements address consultation, coordination and providing technical assistance to each other, as well as to students and their families/ guardians/surrogates to plan for the transition from high school to postsecondary activities and becoming part of the adult community.

(B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

Local education agencies work collaboratively with VR, DBS, APD, Children's Medical Services and Mental Health Services in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process. Local education agencies that are considering transition services during the Individual Educational Plan meeting will invite representatives from any other agency who may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, after obtaining permission from the parent, guardian, or age-of-majority student. If the agency representative is not available to attend the meeting, the school will make an effort to invite another representative. If the agency representative cannot attend the meeting, the school will then look for alternative ways to provide for the student's transition needs. The local education agency must reconvene the Transition Individual Educational Plan team to identify alternative strategies for providing a student's transition needs if an agency fails to do so. To plan effective transition services for students with disabilities, it is essential that all invited partner agencies encourage and support participation in the Transition IEP process.

VR invests 35-40 percent of its statewide staffing resources in transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Additional improvements to the rehabilitation information management and billing systems are being implemented to improve the collection and analysis of transition student data. Several of these additional data

enhancements were implemented to simultaneously meet WIOA requirements. The enhancements will enable VR to conduct differential analysis to better evaluate agency performance and identify how to best improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities.

(C) Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows:

- Local education agencies provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities.
- VR assists with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome.
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities focuses on reducing the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment (Chapter 393, Florida Statutes). Additionally, "to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment." If an individual is eligible for APD waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in Florida rule.
- Children's Medical Services ensures a smooth and successful transition process to adult healthcare services and providers for youth and young adults with special healthcare needs.
- Mental Health Services, in partnership with families and the community, provides a system of care that enables children and adults with mental health or emotional disabilities to live successfully in the community, become self-sufficient or to attain self-sufficiency at adulthood and realize their full potential. Mental health support and services enable adults and transitioning students to participate in community activities such as employment and other valued community roles.

Specific Purpose

Specific intent of the interagency agreement is to:

- Provide guidance to the local education agencies, VR, DBS, APD, Children's Medical Services and Mental Health Services' front-line employees, when serving students transitioning from school to work or postsecondary activities.
- Provide information to parents/students so they know what they can expect from the local education agencies, VR, DBS, APD, Children's Medical Services and Mental Health Services during the transition process.
- Provide parameters to the local education agencies, VR, DBS, APD, Children's Medical Services and Mental Health Services' administrators/managers/nursing supervisors when developing, negotiating and implementing local cooperative agreements.
- Encourage and support the participation of all agency personnel in the IEP process at the local level through the development of guidelines, policies and/or procedures.

Financial Responsibilities
The Department of Education, VR, DBS, APD, Children's Medical Services and Mental Health Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

Conditions and Terms of Reimbursement
If a non-education agency fails to provide or pay for services for which they are responsible, and which are also considered special education and related services, the local education agency (or state agency responsible for developing the student's IEP shall provide or pay for these services to the student in a timely manner. The local education agency or state agency may then claim reimbursement for the services from the non-education agency that was responsible for the provision of the services and failed to provide or pay for these services and that agency shall reimburse the local education agency or state agency in accordance with the terms of this agreement.

D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Outreach and Identification of Students
Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to enter into written agreements with VR, DBS, APD, Children's Medical Services and Mental Health Services employees, on the outreach methods used to inform students with disabilities who may need and could benefit from these agencies.

Brochures, flyers, website resources, presentations, transition fairs or informational letters are available to the local education agency, students and their parents or guardians, to explain the role that VR and other agencies play in the transition process and the agencies' referral/application policies and procedures.

VR transitioned 32 participating school districts from Work-Based Learning Experience contract-based services to a fee-for-service model as registered VR Pre-ETS Providers who can deliver all five of the Pre-ETS. In addition, 15 private charter schools became registered Pre-ETS providers. All school districts, public and private, have the opportunity to become Pre-ETS providers with VR. WBLE is a Pre-ETS that uses real work experiences to provide students with disabilities the knowledge and skills that will help them connect school experiences to future career options. Participating students with disabilities develop appropriate work and interpersonal skills, including soft skills, behaviors and work tolerance needed to achieve successful employment after high school.

(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

VR has a variety of relationships and agreements with private non-profit organizations. These include fee-based services purchased through registered vendors, contracts and other cooperative, non-financial agreements.

All new vendors/providers, whether through a contractual or vendor relationship, must go through a registration and approval process. VR reviews the qualifications of vendors providing services to its customers to ensure the quality of these services, as well as the safety of the public. In addition to approving and registering vendor/provider services, VR conducts employment verifications on customer placements facilitated by vendors /contract providers.

VR policy ensures that customers have a choice of qualified service providers to select. Customers are also informed if the provider has employees experienced in working with special disability populations, foreign languages and other communication skills. Customers have a choice of necessary services, service providers and settings in which to receive the services included in the Individualized Plan for Employment.

Currently, VR has approximately 377 registered Employment Services Providers that deliver employment, supported employment, On-the-Job Training (OJT), WBLE, Pre-ETS and other related services on a fee-for-service basis. Additionally, VR maintains the following contracts and/or agreements:

- 16 agreements with the Centers for Independent Living located throughout the state to provide independent living services;
- Additional contracts with agencies for services such as delegable VR services, interpreting services, rehabilitation technology, assistive technology and special projects.

VR has collaborative, non-contractual arrangements and agreements with non-profit organizations that provide referrals, other vocational rehabilitation services and comparable benefits. Through coordinating with Centers for Independent Living, individuals with disabilities receive life skills training, employability skills training and support such as transportation, clothing and emergency funds.

Relationships with organizations that serve customers with hearing impairments provide opportunities for support groups, sign language classes and placement assistance.

Throughout the state, many VR employees serve as liaisons with specific groups and organizations. Individuals are referred to those groups if it is determined that they can benefit from their services. Services are coordinated with numerous non-profit hospitals and clinics for referrals and medical assistance. Foundations and associations such as the Easter Seals Society, Muscular Dystrophy Association, National Kidney Foundation, Brain Injury Association of Florida, Epilepsy Foundation, Family Network on Disability of Florida and others provide individual and family support groups and disability education to mutual customers.

(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

VR has executed a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA) the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid Plan. The revised agreement will establish a framework, including terms and conditions, which will guide the partners' collaborative efforts to advance the development, improvement and expansion of opportunities for competitive integrated employment as the first and preferred option for individuals with most significant disabilities. This MOA also include a Data sharing agreement to assist agencies in sharing information needed to provide effective services to mutual customers and to identify the financial requirements for providing Supported Employment Services.

VR continues to be an active partner with other state agencies and organizations in implementing Employment First, a national effort to assure individuals with disabilities are offered employment as the first and preferred option in planning their lives. Employment Firs tis consistent with VR's belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can achieve meaningful employment when provided with appropriate supports.

(g) Executive Order 13-284 (Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities) was signed by the Governor of Florida in October 2013. The order mandates that an Interagency Cooperative Agreement be developed and requires nine agencies/organizations to participate in the agreement. This order has now been placed in Florida's Statute.

- The Department of Education-Division of Blind Services (DBS)
- The Department of Education-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Department of Education-Bureau of Exceptional Student Education
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- The Department of Children and Families-Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- The Department of Economic Opportunity
- CareerSource Florida
- The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
- RESPECT of Florida

Six broad-based objectives govern the Employment First Interagency Agreement. VR works closely with the partners to continue to make progress on these objectives.

1. Continue to develop and enhance Supported Employment for persons with the most significant disabilities. The state system for the provision of Supported Employment reflects: (a) mutually agreeable definitions of the services to be provided; (b) administrative responsibility of the intensive component of Supported Employment services to eligible individuals as the primary responsibility of VR for individuals with the most significant disabilities; and (c) administrative responsibility of the extended services component as the primary responsibility of other stakeholders, including APD and the Department of Children and Families' Mental Health and Substance Abuse Programs.

2. Continue to improve the statewide management of Supported Employment programs by avoiding duplication of effort and funding while ensuring accountability. This process will provide a coordinated system of program development for SE services.
3. Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring a comprehensive, continuous, efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, information collection and dissemination, confidentiality and technical assistance.
4. Identify issues, policies and practices that present systemic barriers to effective participation of individuals with the most significant disabilities and develop appropriate resolutions to remove such barriers.
5. Continue to implement an interagency planning process for budget coordination, which defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services for each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
6. Support the belief that all individuals with disabilities can work if provided appropriate services and supports and that a team approach is needed to facilitate quality and appropriate services.

Supported Employment Services
VR is responsible for the first phase of Supported Employment services. VR provides intensive vocational services until the individual and employer are satisfied with the Supported Employment placement and then the individual transitions to a plan for extended services. Supported Employment services consist of intensive, time-limited vocational rehabilitation services (the responsibility of VR) and extended services, also known as the second phase. Funding for the second phase of services is provided by other sources that may include, but are not limited to, APD, the Department of Children and Families' Mental Health and Substance Abuse Programs, natural supports or other identified funding sources.

Extended Services
Funding for the second phase of services is provided by other sources that may include, but are not limited to, APD, the Department of Children and Families' Mental Health, Employer Supports and Substance Abuse Program, Natural Supports or other identified funding sources.

The purpose of extended services is to maintain the individual in SE that is competitive and integrated, enhance the individual's involvement in the workplace culture and provide supports for career advancement. The nature of services provided during the intensive and extended phases may be similar to the initial services provided by VR but will differ in intensity.

VR and its partners continuously seek alternative methods (e.g. Social Security incentives, natural supports, etc.) to provide extended services. VR has encouraged Supported Employment providers to focus on developing natural supports and to encourage employers to act in a support role since this will often occur naturally in the labor market.

VR is now authorized to fund Extended Services for youth with the most significant disabilities for a period of up to four years or until the youth reaches the age of 25, whichever occurs first, if other sources of funding for extended services are unavailable. Allowances would be made for individuals who, while receiving extended services, require additional intensive services through VR because they have destabilized on the job. When appropriate, VR will again assume the responsibility and cost of providing intensive vocational services, including necessary job-related support services.

(h) Coordination with Employers

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Business Relations program builds and sustains partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. These partnerships support business customers' disability inclusion efforts and lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR participants.

Business Relations customizes employer services to assist them to recruit, hire, promote and retain qualified individuals with disabilities. Strategic partnerships that support workforce needs are accomplished through networking with businesses and industry stakeholders and coordinating with core partners to align services to employers. The program's goals, objectives and strategies are as follows:

Goal 1: Become the foremost recognized and trusted resource for employers' disability inclusion needs.

Objective: Increase the number of employers engaged as business partners.

Strategies:

- Develop and use a standard business needs assessment.
- Develop and use a business customer satisfaction tool.
- Staff and train a team that is responsive to business. The team includes the program administrator; a senior VR consultant; a business projects specialist; and 11 business relations representatives located across the state in each of VR's seven administrative areas.
- Implement a business customer relationship management tool.
- Define the services offered to employers and customize them to meet business needs.
- Create statewide consistency in business relations outreach and services.
- Use targeted marketing to engage employers across multiple industries.
- Participate in business-led organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, Disability: IN, trade and sector specific organizations, etc.
- Create strategic practices that can be replicated across the state.
- Align services with the Workforce Development Boards and other community partners.
- Participate in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation's National Employment Team (NET) and the NET-Southeast regional team to share referrals and best practices.
- Engage with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act core partners to share best practices.

Goal 2: Become a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

Objective: Increase referrals of qualified applicants to business partners.

Strategies:

- Facilitate direct access to qualified applicants through business relationships.
- Market career opportunities internally to VR staff.
- Use the AbilitiesWork Help Desk for applicant-matching services for employers.

- Coordinate support services provided by VR contractors.
- Provide a seamless connection to VR services and qualified applicants across a company's footprint locally, regionally, statewide and nationally through the NET.
- Engage in local talent pool coordination with other agencies to meet businesses' workforce needs.
- Participate with the NET and the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) to create increased opportunities for VR job seekers and employers recruiting VR job seekers.
- Collaborate with business to create a pipeline of qualified candidates.

Goal 3: Expand career opportunities for VR candidates.

Objective: Prepare ready-to-work applicants for in-demand careers and jobs that are available now.

Strategies:

- Meet with business and industry to assess workforce needs to better align training with those needs.
- Communicate information from employers about business needs and qualification requirements to VR staff.
- Engage in sector partnerships.
- Provide information to VR staff about in-demand jobs and high growth industries and sectors using labor market information.
- Collaborate with business and education to determine industry recognized training opportunities and inform VR staff about them.
- Collaborate with WIOA core partners to share resources and best practices.
- Generate opportunities for worksite training, including Pre-ETS, with business partners.
- Participate in career events with CareerSource, higher education institutions, and business and community partners

Florida VR is working in collaboration with University of Massachusetts, Boston for technical assistance related to business engagement.

The Florida Legislature passed HB 1507, the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, in 2021 and creates a more unified workforce education and economic development system to improve Floridian's lives. It seeks increased collaboration and cooperation among state business and education communities and aims to address fundamental gaps in access to quality training. The Florida Department of Education's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Blind Services, and Division of Career and Adult Education share this vision, holding all learners and populations at the center in view of outcomes that promote full participation in the workforce and higher credentialing attainment wherever possible.

The REACH Act seeks to expand the state's talent pipeline through attainment of credentials of value and acquisition of postsecondary certification, industry-recognized credentials and degrees. In addition, the legislation enhances integrated service delivery, integrated case management, customer self-service portal, and employer access to workforce talent of individual with disabilities.

(i) Interagency Cooperation

VR has developed a new and updated Memorandum of Agreement with the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid Plan (AHCA) and the agency primarily responsible for providing services to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (APD). This agreement will specifically focus on Supported Employment services and the roles and responsibilities for coordinating these services on a statewide basis.

The purpose of the agreement is to establish a framework, including terms and conditions that will guide collaborative efforts to advance the development, improvement and expansion of opportunities for competitive integrated employment as the first and preferred option for persons with significant disabilities.

The agreement will formalize the collaborative processes that have been implemented to improve employment outcomes for mutual customers. It will focus on coordinating efforts in interagency planning, referrals, informed choice, cross and joint training as well as the provision of technical assistance.

The agreement endorses a shared philosophy with a common set of guiding principles. These principles include but are not limited to the following:

- All programs, projects and activities will be person-centered and include respect for individual dignity, self-determination, pursuit of meaningful careers and informed choice.
- Reliance on and pursuit of evidence-based best, promising and emerging practices.
- The use of qualified staff to facilitate the achievement of competitive integrated employment.
- Establishment of a referral process for mutual customers.
- To clearly define and clarify boundaries between the VR and APD programs to ensure the complimentary provision of employment services and promote timely access for persons with the most significant disabilities.

VR is working closely with APD to develop competitive integrated employment alternatives for individuals receiving services in a segregated setting. VR will provide technical assistance and support as APD expands these program options. Under WIOA requirements, VR will provide or coordinate information and education for individuals receiving services in sheltered workshops receiving subminimum wages.

VR provides Career Counseling Information and Referral Services (CCIR) to approximately 3,000 people this year. Most of these individuals are in programs that APD supports such as Sheltered Workshops and other Adult Day Training programs that pay subminimum wages.

CCIR services introduces the many services and options available through VR, including Competitive Integrated Employment as well as training opportunities to expand opportunities. This training opportunity is required by the Department of Labor and is a WIOA requirement.

The MOA between VR, Agency for Health Care Administration and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities provides for opportunities for collaboration to ensure that youth and adults with Developmental Disabilities have access to all the services that VR offers to its customers.

VR collaborates with the Florida Department of Children and Families', Mental Health and Substance Abuse Programs to improve and increase employment opportunities for people with mental illness. Part of this collaborative work is conducted through a formalized Employment First agreement, while other coordination occurs during a customer's transition from the initial and intense phase of Supported Employment to the ongoing and extended service phase of Supported Employment services.

Additionally, VR is working closely with the Department of Children and Families Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to expand access to evidence-based models of supported employment for individuals with mental health conditions (I.e., Individual Placement and Support). VR has piloted the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) national model and will be expanding services to assist with the employment and treatment for individuals with persistent and severe mental illness. This initiative is in line with the Administration's priorities to improve employment and services for individuals with mental health disorders.

VR and the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health have also partnered to participate in the ASPIRE (Advancing State Policy Integration for Recovery and Employment) initiative through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. As one of 7 states selected to participate in this initiative, Florida will receive assistance to align policies and practices across state agencies in support of competitive integrated employment for people with mental health conditions. The key state agencies involved in the initiative are VR, Department Children and Families, Agency for Health Care Administration and Career Source. Florida's specific goals are to improve interagency collaboration, increase access to IPS services, optimize funding in support of IPS services, align data collection elements and practices and ensure equal and equitable participation in employment services

VR also works in partnership with local education agencies and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as High School/ High Tech (HSHT), Project SEARCH programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and other work experiences, often lead to successful employment with appropriate supports.

For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provide funding for participants to receive services and other supports needed to prepare for and maintain employment. This shared support helps partner programs serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these services.

(j) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development
Assurance of an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessional personnel is the major driver for the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) Human Resource Development Section. Data from numerous sources is used to determine current and projected needs, as well as VR's progress toward meeting them. The table below includes VR personnel and turnover data for SFY 2020-2021 and projected staffing requirements for SFY 2020-2023. It should be noted that positions are vacated for many reasons, including termination, promotion, lateral position transfers, resignation or retirement. VR continues to employ strategies to address turnover as well as develop and prepare staff for advancement opportunities.

Figure 9.01
VR Personnel and Projected Staffing Needs

Personnel Category*	Number of Personnel, as of 9/22/21	Turnover Rate for SFY 2019-20	**Projected Staffing Needs for SFY 2022-23
Counselor Staff	394	30%	111
Staff Supporting Counselor Activities	335	10%	37
Administrative Staff	158	7%	10
Total Full-time Equivalents	884		
Contracted Counselor Staff	77		
Total Contracted Field Staff	145		

*Categories are based on RSA-2 Report definitions and positions included in each category.

**This number is an annual average derived by multiplying the number of positions for the job category by the percentage of vacated positions.

Staffing needs for Transition Youth Program counselors remains consistent with overall counselor staffing projections. When factoring in population growth, the projected five-year staffing needs are slightly higher than noted above but would require that VR be provided with additional FTEs.

The state's automated People First personnel system maintains employment histories to help project human resource needs. The state continues to make available a deferred retirement option program (DROP) that allows individuals to continue working for the state for five years beyond their original retirement date. Because it is impossible to anticipate how many individuals will accept the deferral option, projecting future employment needs is difficult. However, it is known that there are currently 52 individuals in DROP, 33 individuals with 30 or more years of service and 53 individuals over the age of 62.

VR uses People First and RIMS data, as well as internal reports, to obtain:

- The number and classification of authorized positions for each local unit and state headquarters in relation to the number of individuals served
- The number and classification of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The projected number and classification of personnel who will be needed in five years to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The state institutions of higher education that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by program type
- The number of students in each of these institutions, by program type
- The number of students graduating from each program and the credentials they have received
- To ensure the continuity of quality rehabilitation services and to address employee vacancies and turnover in particularly difficult to fill geographic areas, VR has contracted for employees. The contracts ensure that qualified personnel are hired to provide necessary rehabilitation services. A VR counselor/ analyst reviews each case and performs/ authorizes administrative activities that federal regulations (34 CFR 361.13) specify are the responsibility of VR and cannot be delegated to private providers. These activities include:
- All decisions affecting eligibility for VR, the nature and scope of available services and the provision of these services and the suspension, reduction and termination of these services
- The determination to close the records of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome
- Policy formulation and implementation
- Allocation and expenditure of VR funds
- Participation as a partner in the CareerSource Florida service delivery system
- Described in the following table is information from institutions of higher education in Florida that prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals, categorized by institution and type of program.

Figure 9.02
Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education

Institution, Program Type and Degree	Students Currently Enrolled	VR/RSA Sponsored Employees	VR/RSA Sponsored Graduates	Previous Year Graduates
Florida Atlantic University- Graduate-level Rehabilitation Training Program; MEd and PhD	MEd- 30 PhD- 3	MEd- 0 PhD- 0	MEd- 0 PhD- 0	MEd- 6 PhD- 0
Florida International University- Rehabilitation Counseling Program; MS in Counselor Education	MS- 12	MS- 0	MS- 2	MS- 2
University of South Florida- Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Program; MA	MA- 136	MA- 3	MA- 20	MA- 40

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel
VR maintains close relationships with universities including minority institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and disability-specific organizations. VR employees collaborate with universities in securing grant funding, invite university employees to help with training and education activities and provide practicum and internship slots for students.

VR acknowledges that it will not be able to recruit an adequate number of qualified rehabilitation counselors to replace those retiring and departing for other reasons. VR is currently engaged in the activities indicated below to address recruitment, preparation and retention of counselors.

Personnel Standards
There is not a state-approved or recognized certification, licensure, or registration of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. VR, in conjunction with the Florida Rehabilitation Council established the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) educational eligibility requirement as its standard.

Efforts are made to recruit and hire counselors who meet the CRC educational eligibility status. If VR is unsuccessful in finding enough qualified applicants, it will accept those who meet the minimal initial standard for providing counseling and guidance services. The individual(s) must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and one year of experience counseling individuals with disabilities. Alternative majors other than social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science may be considered along with the minimum qualification requirements for the position.

When evaluating the suitability of alternative majors, the hiring authority should consider the major area of study's applicability to the required knowledge, skills and abilities. A master's degree from an accredited university in a social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science can substitute for the year of required experience.

The State of Florida allows employees to use a tuition waiver to enroll in six hours (or less) of courses per semester on a space-available basis at public universities. Florida has three CACREP-accredited programs (Florida Atlantic University, the University of South Florida and the Florida International University) offering Rehabilitation Counseling degrees. There are several other Florida universities that offer degrees and courses in related fields, including two sign language interpreting programs.

VR employees are encouraged to use the State of Florida Tuition Waiver program as much as possible, since it represents a significant savings to VR.

In addition to the Florida public universities referenced above, VR uses the resources of Auburn University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, the University of West Virginia, the University of Alabama, University of North Texas, UMass Online, Thomas University, Emporia State University, Troy State University and the University of Wisconsin-Stout, all of whom provide online Masters-level rehabilitation programs. VR will continue to use additional programs, as appropriate.

Personnel Development

VR's Learning and Development Office (LDO) efforts will continue to be oriented toward appropriate and adequate training for all employees, with available resources allocated to the CSPD effort. Although the in-service training grant was the primary funding source for these activities, it was not the only resource used to fund staff development and training activities. Supplemental funds were provided from other budget resources.

Although there has been an emphasis on helping counselors meet the CSPD standard and developing the technical, managerial and leadership skills of supervisors and managers, VR provides staff development opportunities to employees at every level. Examples include the Counselor Training Program:

Webinars on over 20 topics annually are available for new and existing staff and many are being developed in direct response to recommendations from participants.

- Developed Welcome Packets for new counselors. This packet includes information about how to prepare for new counselor training, professional development, the mentorship program and a big book of first that describes unique situations a counselor may encounter.
- Focused training on field level supervisors to expand the support and guidance provided to vocational rehabilitation counselors. Efforts will include identifying areas to reduce administrative burdens while maintaining a high level of quality assurance and fiscal responsibility.

Additional Personnel Development Activities

The Organization and Employee Support Team (OES) recently designed a new human resource information site, available through VR's SharePoint application. Using SharePoint increases the level of support and customer service provided to VR's employees, volunteers, contracted staff, supervisors and personnel liaisons. The intent is to provide user-friendly experiences for new and existing employees.

The OES Homepage provides job opportunity announcements, access to more than 900 HR forms, procedures and policies and a calendar of upcoming important HR dates and events.

In carrying out its staff development and training program, VR addresses several topics in its training curricula. The training curricula include (but are not limited to) modules on the following: Disability Disclosure, Highly Effective Technicians, Working with Customers Impacted by the Justice System, Introduction to Rehabilitation Engineering and the Services They Provide, Job Placement, How to Partner with Veterans Affairs VR Program, Counseling & Guidance for Informed Choice, School to Work Transition, Working with Customers with a Mental Health Diagnosis, Vocational Assessments and Time Management.

VR places emphasis on the professional development of unit supervisors, area supervisors and area directors. Topics are selected based on policy or procedure changes, new initiatives, audit and review findings and general professional development.

Counseling and non-counseling employees, including administrative employees, will continue to receive training in core subjects through distance and onsite learning. As caseloads and customer needs continue to grow more complex, the role of the paraprofessional technician becomes more and more critical to the effective management of caseloads. All counseling staff will continue to work toward CRC eligibility and/or degrees in rehabilitation or counseling through tuition waivers and other mechanisms.

Center for Assistive, Rehabilitation & Robotics Technology, contracted through the University of South Florida, provides evaluations and assessment to identify and recommend technologies that will be useful accommodations for our customers.

State labor market information, as well as national data, provides information on the employment and advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities. Job announcements are published online through the People First website, providing access to all state jobs through one internet portal.

Manuals related to policy and rehabilitation information management are available online. Employees can find more information about medical and psychological conditions, rehabilitation technology, federal and state plans, legislation and regulations and employment-related information.

Onboarding

Onboarding helps new personnel successfully assimilate into their new position, with a quicker ramp-up to productivity. VR wants to help all personnel be successful in their new job, get up-and-running with their new duties quickly and smoothly, and contribute to VR's success. Since VR personnel includes career service, selected exempt service/senior management service and OPS employees, as well as volunteers and contracted staff, all with differing onboarding needs, it became apparent that a one-size-fits-all approach to onboarding was not sufficient.

Based on that, OES created onboarding resource sites specific to needs of VR's career service, selected exempt service/senior management service and OPS employees, as well as sites specific to VR's volunteers and contracted staff. Each site provides onboarding information for the specific personnel category, such as New Hire Paperwork that provides the new employee with all of the required hiring forms and related policies, VR Mentorship Program information, TED training, education and development links and resources, and the human resources page.

VR's Mentorship Program

A major reason why newly hired employees struggle and ultimately leave is failure to establish connections and build strong interpersonal relationships within the organization. Understanding that new employees need connection, a sense of belonging, a sense of their potential, and a need to feel valued, OES worked with various sections within VR to create a Mentorship Program.

Mentors often play an important role in making new employees feel valued, developing coworker relationships, and helping new employees feel comfortable during the first few months of employment. Each new employee or protégé will be assigned to a mentor for a period of up to a year. No mentor will be assigned to more than two active protégés at any one time.

The Mentorship Program is composed of two parts. The first is a comprehensive information resource site delivered through SharePoint. The site has information specific to mentors, protégés, subject matter experts (SMEs) and supervisors. The second component is the Individualized Mentoring Action Plan, or IMAP. The IMAP is a software application designed specifically for the mentorship program. In the IMAP, mentors and SMEs create personalized profiles. The profiles are used to assist with assigning mentors and SMEs to appropriate protégés. The software is designed to quickly sort through hundreds of mentor and SME profiles that match the needs identified in the protégé's profile.

Human Resources Page

The human resources page is a one-stop information resource for VR personnel. The human resources page consists of six functional groups, which are further divided into subject groups, specific categories, and detailed information pages. Topics include employee rights, benefits and responsibilities, resources such as forms, procedures, policies, and useful information about VR and state government. Most pages have embedded links to either an internal portion of the VR intranet, or to an outside website. Each employee can then bookmark any page for easy access.

Needs Assessment and Evaluation

A bi-annual training needs assessment is conducted using information from a number of sources. These include a formal needs assessment instrument, performance evaluation data, training evaluation sheets obtained from every sponsored program, exit interviews and supervisory input. The needs assessment data determines program development and modification.

Annual performance evaluations are conducted on each employee, with intermittent evaluation, if indicated. Performance is evaluated according to standards and goals established at the beginning of the evaluation period. Employees are evaluated in the context of their knowledge, skills and abilities within the field of rehabilitation, and on policy about priority of service to individuals with the most-significant disabilities. If circumstances change, training and professional development activities are provided to help the employee meet his/her goal in support of VR's mission.

In carrying out its staff development and training program, VR addresses several topics in its training curricula. The training curricula include (but are not limited to) modules on the following: preliminary assessment, eligibility determination, assessment, IPE development, vocational counseling (within the modules on eligibility determination and individualized plan for employment development), job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural competence, ethics, supported employment, transition from school to work, medical and psychological issues, caseload management and special programs.

VR places emphasis on the professional development of unit supervisors, area supervisors, and area directors. Topics are selected based on policy or procedure changes, new initiatives, audit and review findings, and general professional development.

Counseling and non-counseling employees, including administrative employees, will continue to receive training in core subjects through distance and on-site learning. As caseloads and customer needs continue to grow more complex, the role of the paraprofessional technician becomes more and more critical to the effective management of caseloads. All counseling staff will continue to work toward CRC eligibility and/or degrees in rehabilitation or counseling through tuition waivers and other mechanisms.

Engineers from the Rehabilitation Technology Engineering Program, contracted through the University of South Florida, provide training on rehabilitation technology and engineering. The contract ensures that rehabilitation technology engineers are available statewide.

State labor market information, as well as national data, provides information on the employment and advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities. Job announcements are published online through the People First website, providing access to all state jobs through one internet portal.

Manuals related to policy and rehabilitation information management are available online. Employees can access the internet to find information about medical and psychological conditions, rehabilitation technology, Federal/State Plan, legislation and regulations, and employment-related information.

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Presenters provide orientation and training for employees serving transition students with disabilities from VR, the Bureau of Exceptional Student Education and community partners. Cross- training between BESE and VR staff is emphasized through interagency agreements as presented in Section (d) of this plan portion. The Department of Education's State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) profiles are used to gather important statistical information on graduation rates, dropout rates, Individual Educational Plan compliance and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. BESE and VR continue to share and analyze student data to identify students with Individual Education Plans or 504 Plans who can benefit from VR services and any potential gaps in service

VR strives to help LEAs meet the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. VR support includes offering an early VR referral and application process beginning at age 14, VR Transition Liaisons Contact List, VR Transition Brochures and coordination of the Individual Education Plan with the Individualized Plan for Employment when served by both agencies. VR endorses evidence-based LEA services that benefit students with disabilities, including educating students in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers and having access to the original curricula. VR counselors continue to attend regular in-service training that specifically targets transition youth issues and helps meet the requirements of the CSPD.

VR and community partners continue to make presentations and participate in annual transition conferences at the national, state and local level to better serve students with disabilities. These events allow for agency updates, contributing information on promising initiatives and sharing evidence-based best practices. When VR employees and local educators are assigned to teams at events, they use this time to discuss issues and learn from one another about effective transition practices. This information is often incorporated into VR staff trainings.

Statewide transition training and resources are provided continually throughout the year. New counselors receive training, which includes resources from the VR Transition Youth Program. T. Transition Administrators deliver training to school staff, ESE Directors and VR staff at the beginning of every school year. VR employees have access to the "Effective Practices for Working with the School System" and the "Outreach for the School System" presentations developed to improve collaboration between VR and the LEAs. At the local level, VR employees participate in interagency groups with a transition focus to improve local coordination and services to students, families, schools, employers and agency partners. Additionally, local VR Transition Liaisons meet twice a year with the state-level VR Transition Administrator to discuss their progress and technical assistance needs on Local Education Agency Agreements.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs
VR employees need to be able to work with Florida's diverse population. One way VR does this is to actively recruit counselors and support employees who have diverse backgrounds. VR places advertisements in newspapers that reach diverse group of people and collaborates with local civic and social service groups. VR also provides a five percent pay increase to bilingual staff, for positions where this is beneficial to the agency. Bilingual individuals are on staff, but qualified interpreters or translators will continue to be used when a counselor is unable to communicate directly with a customer in his/her preferred language. VR will continue to partner with local vendors to offer this service.

American Sign Language interpreting needs for customers who are Deaf or Deaf blind are met using a either staff interpreters (including those hired via the contract with Service Source) or arrangements with qualified local interpreter service providers. When either staff interpreters or local interpreters are not available, VR will reschedule appointments or use available text communication devices with customers. VR also has assistive listening devices available in most offices for VR employees to communicate with individuals who are hard of hearing or late-deafened and do not know sign-language.

In addition, VR complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act Section 508 by providing materials in alternative formats as requested by the customer.

Further, VR provides for an initial increase in a starting salary for individuals who are fluent in Spanish, Creole or Haitian. Staff also arranges for bilingual spoken language interpreters/translators if a bilingual staff is not available. Training and technical assistance to VR staff on the provision of interpreters/ translators is ongoing.

(k) Statewide Assessment

In February 2019, VR, in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), completed its three-year comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA). The CSNA was conducted by the San Diego State University Interwork Institute. They worked closely with VR, FRC and VR's stakeholder groups to describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Florida. The CSNA consisted of the following components: analysis of existing data sources, key informant and focus group interviews, surveys of individuals with disabilities, partner surveys, VR staff surveys and business surveys. Findings and recommendations from the CSNA will guide agency planning and development of state plans for federal fiscal years 2020 - 2023.

The CSNA contains information in seven general sections and identifies recurring themes. This information is being used to inform the VR strategic plan for 2020- 2023.

Section One: Overall Performance of VR

- VR staff are characterized as committed and caring individuals that strive to do their best for consumers
- The high turnover of staff has been a challenge for the organization in multiple areas and is related to the pay scale for staff
- There is a lack of community awareness about VR and a need to increase communication about VR to the public

Section Two: The needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment

- Transportation remains the most significant need of consumers served by VR, and this is especially true in rural areas
- The most frequently cited vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities included all types of training, work skills, increased education, work experience and social skills development.
- Employer misconceptions about the ability of individuals with disabilities is a significant barrier to employment and becomes more significant with the increase in the significance of the disability.
- There is an ever-increasing percentage of individuals being served by VR that have significant mental health impairments. VR staff and service providers need training to ensure they are aware of how to best serve this population.
- There is a reduction in the number of individuals working in subminimum wage employment in Florida, and VR and their network of providers needs to be sure that they have the capacity to serve these individuals through furthering developing their capacity to provide supported and customized employment.
- Self-advocacy training for individuals with disabilities is an essential rehabilitation need.

Section Three: The needs of individuals with disabilities from different ethnic groups, including needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program

- Individuals with disabilities living in the rural areas of Florida were the most frequently mentioned underserved group. The lack of public transportation and the distance that has to be travelled to get to the VR offices or to work was the primary reason noted for being underserved
- The need for work skills, education, training and rehabilitation professionals that speak their language were the most frequently noted needs of individuals from diverse cultures.
- Deaf individuals were characterized as potentially underserved because there is a shortage of qualified interpreters in many parts of the State.

Section Four: The needs of youth and students with disabilities in transition

Recurring themes in this area include:

- All of the five required pre-employment transition services represent significant rehabilitation needs of students with disabilities in Florida, with work-based learning experiences being the most significant and important need.
- Transportation is a major barrier for students and their ability to experience work
- The primary rehabilitation needs of youth with disabilities in Florida are work skills, soft skills, education, training and transportation.
- Youth with disabilities in Florida need to develop the ability to advocate for themselves to ensure they have access to the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities.

Section Five: The needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide Workforce Development System

Recurring themes in this area include:

- The relationship of the CareerSource Centers with VR remains one primarily of referral rather than co-enrollment and braiding of funding.
- The CareerSource Centers were characterized as being ineffective in their service to individuals with disabilities in Florida, though there are areas that do better than others.
- Ongoing consistent cross-training between the core partners is a need so that staff are aware of how each other's programs function and what limitations in service exist.
- CareerSource Center staff need to receive ongoing training on how to effectively work with individuals with disabilities, especially those with mental health impairments.

Section Six: The need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs in Florida

- The need to develop service providers is greatest in the rural areas, especially providers for supported and customized employment.
- There is a need for service providers that are skilled in working with individuals with mental health impairments and other most significant disabilities.
- There is a need to develop providers that can sign and have experience working with Deaf individuals.

Section Seven: The needs of businesses

- The most frequent feedback received from participants across all groups regarding employers was the need to educate them and reduce the biases held about the abilities of individuals with disabilities. Employers were frequently characterized as fearful about hiring individuals with disabilities and about their capacity to perform the essential functions of many jobs.
- In order to improve their effectiveness in serving employers, VR will need to increase the number of their Business Relations Representatives.
- There is an opportunity for BRRs to expand the partnership with their Title I counterparts to increase the number of employers they can reach. While this partnership was active in some Areas, it was not consistent.

The CSNA made several recommendations related to the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career service and Pre-ETS.

- VR should develop a program in partnership with secondary and postsecondary schools throughout Florida that ensures that students with disabilities that will be pursuing postsecondary education get connected to the Disabled Student Services programs at the colleges prior to the first day of college classes. This will ensure that any reasonable accommodation needs are met prior to the start of course work and will maximize the potential for student success.
- VR should recruit Pre-ETS providers that will provide training in self-advocacy to help address the apparent shortage of these services. In addition, VR should consider partnering with the Centers for Independent Living in Florida as a way to address this service gap.

- VR is encouraged to consult with the Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC) to develop an intensive technical assistance agreement aimed at improving services to Juvenile Justice and Foster Care Youth. The Y-TAC can help VR conduct process mapping of the Juvenile Justice and Foster Care systems and develop procedures that facilitate access to VR services for these youth. The Y-TAC may be able to help VR establish partnerships with the Title I Youth programs to help increase services to out-of-school youth in Florida.
- Continue to develop opportunities for work experiences in the community, but also consider the impact of time-limited experiences on participants. Create a supportive pathway for students that may want permanent employment.
- VR should work with schools to identify and refer students receiving services under a 504 plan and encourage schools to refer these students to VR earlier than their senior year.
- Examine strategies to enhance parent involvement in the planning and delivery of transition services. VR may wish to consult with the PROMISE programs in California and Wisconsin to identify successful family engagement strategies. Information about the California PROMISE program can be found here: https://www.capromise.org/. Information about the Wisconsin PROMISE program can be found here: https://promisewi.com/.
- VR should actively recruit Pre-ETS providers that can communicate using sign language and that have experience working with deaf individuals. In addition, VR should identify peer mentors for the youth with deafness that will help them develop self-advocacy skills and help them develop high expectations.

VR is pursuing technical assistance to address these recommendations through a variety of initiatives, including major revisions to our fee-for-service model, expanding opportunities for school districts to be providers of Pre-ETS, and streamlining the case management process for students who are potentially eligible.

VR continues to address the needs identified in the 2019 CSNA. VR has also begun the process to engage San Diego State University to conduct CSNA for the 2023 – 2027 plan.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Addendum

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is engaged in a five-year plan to reduce and consolidate service delivery locations across the state. The plan takes advantage of new opportunities for telework, virtual meetings and community-based service delivery. The plan also maximizes opportunities for co-location with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners, including CareerSource Florida.

Implementation of the plan may result in the need to engage in “the remodeling or alteration of an existing building” to improve infrastructure and accessibility of the publicly owned locations in order to ensure the continuity of services. If specific projects are identified, VR must ensure that all alternative funding mechanisms are exhausted before seeking approval to pursue such modifications under the provisions of the “Establishment if a facility for a public or nonprofit community rehabilitation program” under state and federal law. Florida VR has not identified a need to establish a nonprofit community rehabilitation program, and implementation of this addendum relates only to remodeling or altering publicly owned property.

(I) Annual Estimates

Number of Individuals in the State Who are Eligible for Services under this State Plan
From October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, VR anticipates that approximately 45,210 Floridians will be eligible for VR services.

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Cost of Services with Funds Provided under Part B of Title I and Part B of Title VI of the Act
From October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, VR anticipates a workload of 45,210 individuals. Because of limited resources, VR has determined that vocational rehabilitation services cannot be provided to all individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. The following projections for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022-23 are based on case management and budget projection models.

The projected number of eligible individuals to receive vocational rehabilitation services by priority category and cost of services per category are as follows:

Figure 9.03
Projected Number of Eligible Individuals to Receive VR Services

Priority Category	Projected Number Served	Projected Service Cost
Category 1	25,761	$55,387,063
Category 2	18,572	$40,275,125
Category 3	877	$2,781,625
Total	45,210	$98,443,813

The estimated number of customers to be served in Supported Employment (Part B of Title VI of the Act) is 10,201.

Total projected costs for IPE services are $98,443,813. Additionally, the cost for assessment services is projected at $18,431,188. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for FFY 2022 is $116,790,000. The revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be $116,875,000.

Some expenditures associated with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act initiatives such as Pre-ETS and Job Retention Services (discretionary services under Order of Selection) have not been factored into these projections. Until these costs are fully realized and included into service and cost projections, VR will continue its current management of wait list categories under Order of Selection.

(m) State Goals and Priorities

VR Vision
To become the first-place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

VR Mission
To help people with disabilities find and maintain advance in employment and enhance their independence.

Strategic Goals and Priorities
During FFY 2018-2019, VR, in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council, completed its three-year comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Information obtained from the needs assessment, management reports and feedback from VR employees, stakeholders and customers were used to evaluate current goals, objectives and projects and establish new strategic priorities.

Following the previously established planning process, the Senior Executive Leadership Team regularly reviews progress and updates strategies as needed. Annually, the Senior Executive Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan and then held a planning meeting to determine which projects to include in the updated strategic plan. Strategy updates are provided quarterly and reported out to VR Leadership and stakeholders.

Overall, the numbers of individuals seeking VR services fell beginning in March of 2020 with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although VR continued to provide services without interruption throughout the pandemic, fewer customers were seeking the services. VR has engaged in outreach activities and the impact of the pandemic has been mitigated by public health initiatives; however, VR has not recovered from the initial impact. For instance, there were approximately 25 percent fewer applications in September of 2021 than in September of 2019.

Current Goals, Objectives and Strategies
Goal 1. Enhance employment opportunities through individualized services to meet workforce demands and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Objective 1.1 Expand service delivery options.

Strategy 1.1.1 Enhance services for individuals with the most significant disabilities to assist them to avoid, or transition from, subminimum wage employment, by expanding service delivery options with the goal of competitive, integrated employment, such as: supported employment, CCIR, customized employment and Discovery.

Strategy 1.1.2 Enhance services for individuals with severe psychiatric disabilities by expanding Individual Placement and Support to additional areas via strengthened partnerships.

Strategy 1.1.3 Strengthen the Business Relations program, including implementation of technical assistance provided by WINTAC.

Measure of Success:

- Customer satisfaction survey results
- Increased employment outcomes
- Increased business engagement and retention

Objective 1.2 Improve communication with customers.

Strategy 1.2.1 Update publications and brochures to be more informative and user-friendly.

Strategy 1.2.2 Revise VR's website for ease of use, clarity of information and accessibility.

Strategy 1.2.3 Implement a data-driven case review process to verify that contact timeframes are adhered to.

Measure of Success:

- Improved customer satisfaction survey results
- Reduced number of "no contact" closures
- Increased employment outcomes
- Reduced number of valid communication complaints made to the Ombudsman Unit
- Goal 2. Increase organizational effectiveness by reducing complexity, streamlining processes, and encouraging a flexible, supportive workplace culture.

Objective 2.1 Streamline internal systems/processes.

Strategy 2.1.1 Simplify service delivery by creating a new electronic referral system that manages referrals to providers, documentation of services provided, and payment processes.

Strategy 2.1.2 Implement a new case management system that streamlines case documentation, accountability and reporting.

Measure of Success:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Increased employment outcomes

Objective 2.2 Enhance availability and use of data.

Strategy 2.2.1 Improve data integrity by continuing to incorporate internal controls for data collection and reporting.

Strategy 2.2.2 Continue to improve ease of access to data to facilitate data-driven decision-making.

Measure of Success:

- Increased compliance with statutory requirements
- Reduced number of errors in data collection and reporting

Goal 3. Stabilize the VR workforce through improved quality of life for staff.

Objective 3.1 Develop the capacity of existing resources.

Strategy 3.1.1 Increase the availability and quality of training for all staff and all positions.

Strategy 3.1.2 Evaluate positions, roles and organization of staff to maximize effectiveness and efficiency, including simplifying responsibilities via technical assistance from WINTAC.

Measure of Success:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Improved employment outcomes

Objective 3.2 **Incentivize high quality performance.**

Strategy 3.2.1 Explore options for improving compensation for staff members.

Measure of Success:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Increased employment outcomes

Goal 4. Maximize engagement with partners to enhance access to services for improved service delivery.

Objective 4.1 Document and implement partnerships.

Strategy 4.1.1 Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with CareerSource Florida and its local boards, by collaborating on and implementing memorandums of understanding and infrastructure funding agreements to streamline services for job seekers and businesses.

Strategy 4.1.2 Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with state and local education agencies by collaborating on and implementing mechanisms to streamline services for students with disabilities.

Strategy 4.1.2 Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with state agencies that serve individuals with developmental and/or mental health disabilities by collaborating on and implementing mechanisms to streamline services for students with disabilities.

Measure of Success:

- Increased number of individuals served via partnerships
- Increased employment outcomes

Objective 4.2 Enhance the effectiveness of partnerships.

Strategy 4.2.1 Increase the availability and quality of training for partner organizations.

Measure of Success:

- Increased capacity of partners
- Increased employment outcomes

(n) Order of Selection

Justification for the Order of Selection

VR determined that sufficient resources were not available to provide rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities who apply. Consequently, VR established an Order of Selection (OOS) within the state to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second and all other eligible individuals selected last. This decision was based on use of funds in the preceding years, projected funding, projected number and types of referrals, number of eligible individuals and counselor caseloads.

The OOS remains in effect statewide and does not select one type of disability over another. The OOS is not established based on age, sex, marital status, religion, race, color, national origin, or political affiliation, and is not based on the vocational goal of the individual with a disability. Elements that relate to the significance of disability are the only factors used in OOS. In accordance with Section 412 of WIOA, VR has elected to provide Job Retention Services (discretionary services to eligible individuals regardless of order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment).

Each month, the Executive Leadership Team looks at expenditure and revenue projections, numbers of individuals in each OOS category, numbers of individuals on the waitlist for services and staff capacity, to determine whether to release individuals from the waitlist. Based on the available data, VR periodically releases individuals from the waitlist into service. The number of potentially eligible students with disabilities receiving Pre-ETS is also a consideration.

Figure 9.04
Projected Outcome and Service Goals and Time Frames for Federal Fiscal Year 2022-23

Priority Category	Projected Number Served	Projected Service Cost	Projected Successful Closures	Projected Unsuccessful Closures	Months to Complete
Category 1	25,761	$55,387,063	2,334	4,492	24.0
Category 2	18,572	$40,275,125	2,329	3,514	16.0
Category 3	877	$2,781,625	392	64	7.0

Service Costs for FFY 2022-23
Total projected costs for IPE services are $137,500,000. Additionally, the cost for assessment services is projected at $18,431,188. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for FFY 2022 is $116,875,000. The revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be $137.5 million.

Some expenditures associated with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act initiatives such as Pre-ETS, and Job Retention Services (discretionary services under Order of Selection) have not been factored into these projections. Until these costs are fully realized and included into service and cost projections, VR will continue its current management of wait list categories under Order of Selection

Order of Selection Policies
Individuals needing Supported Employment services are assessed as having a most significant disability. Additionally, individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits as a result of being determined to be disabled or blind are assessed as having at least a significant disability and are evaluated to determine whether they meet the criteria for individuals with most significant disabilities.

After an individual is found eligible for VR services, an OOS determination is completed. Additional evaluations or assessments to make this determination may be needed. The VR counselor and individual jointly determine the individual's OOS priority category by evaluating his or her functional limitations, anticipated services needed and the duration of the services.

This policy does not affect an individual who began to receive services under an approved individualized plan for employment prior to the implementation date of OOS, or those individuals who are in need of post-employment services.

VR officially notifies all individuals of their individual OOS determination. Individuals not immediately activated for development of an employment plan are offered Information and Referral services and the option to be placed on a waiting list until employment plan development services can be initiated. Individuals on the waiting list are contacted annually to determine if additional information is available. As resources become available, those with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second and all other eligible individuals selected last.

Order of Selection Priority Category Description
Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 1)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

- Seriously limits three or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome;
- Requires three or more primary services;
- Requires services which must be provided over an extended period (at least 12 months); and
- Requires services that are not likely to be corrected through surgical intervention and/or other treatment modes.

Individuals with Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 2)
An eligible individual with a disability which:

- Seriously limits one or two functional capacities, in terms of an employment outcome;
- Requires two or more primary services;
- Requires services which must be provided over an extended period (at least six months); OR
- The individual is a recipient of Social Security Disability Insurance benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a result of disability or blindness.

Other Eligible Individuals (Priority Category 3)
An eligible individual with a disability which:

- Limits one or more major life activities; and/or
- Services are expected to last less than six months.

VR provides Job Retention Services (discretionary services to eligible individuals regardless of order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment).

(o) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

To meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, VR collaborates and contracts with community partners to provide Supported Employment services. For FFY 2019-20, Supported Employment services were funded by Title I funding and Title VI-B funding. These funds are available on a statewide basis. Florida VR uses the majority of its Supported Employment expenditures on allowable services to youth.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act presents VR with the opportunity to provide a wide array of services with a focus on youth. Additional opportunities available include the provision of Extended Services to youth for up to four years or until the youth turns 25 years of age, whichever occurs first or another funding source is identified. VR is now also authorized to provide supported employment services up to 24 months and may extend this time period if necessary.

VR has focused on youth services and has expanded several options designed to help youth achieve employment outcomes. These options allow youth to gain a variety of skills and exposure to multiple career options and are designed to provide skills and direction for youth so that when they are ready for Supported Employment services they have skills and knowledge to help their efforts be successful.

Goal 1: Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive Supported Employment services.

VR will:

Continue to provide supported employment services on a statewide basis through Title I funds. Statewide allocation of funds allows for equal delivery of services throughout Florida. Individuals may receive supported employment services using a combination of Title I funds and revenues generated from Social Security reimbursements, community rehabilitation partners, or other state program revenues.

Provide a variety of training and awareness programs designed to increase the awareness of supported employment as a vocational service for individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR Senior Program Consultants have increased outreach activities with a focus on state and local education partnerships. The VR consultants have provided trainings with a focus on sharing information to assist youth, adults and families in their consideration of pursuing Supported Employment Services.

Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs with successful strategies.

VR has initiated Discovery Services, a person-centered planning tool as a way to increase the number of individuals with significant and complex disabilities receiving supported employment services. Discovery provides an opportunity for individuals to move seamlessly from this person-centered assessment and planning to Supported Employment Services.

VR has initiated a Supported Employment Customized Placement Benchmark to incentives providers to work with individuals who will need more intense supports and assistance to become successfully employed. Training opportunities were developed for providers and VR staff on this customized employment strategy.

Goal 2: Use Title VI, Part B funds for Supported Employment services to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities with a focus on youth.

- Use Title I funds, supplemented with VI, Part B funds, to provide supported employment services as specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment for youth.
- Purchase supported employment services based upon established performance benchmarks. The contract for supported employment focuses on performance and reinforces the focus on successful outcomes for individuals served.
- Funds may also be used for related customized employment strategies of Supported Self-Employment services
- Provide up to four years of extended services for youth 24 and under when appropriate
- VR Consultants have provided extensive outreach to educators, community providers, individuals, families, community partners, VR staff to promote Supported Employment as an opportunity for youth to become successful in becoming employed and developing a career path.
- VR works closely with the Statewide Employment First Interagency Committee. This group focuses on promoting competitive integrated employment as a first choice for youth and adults with disabilities in Florida.

- The Bureau of Field Services Employment Programs Unit provides technical assistance and support to a wide variety of stakeholders.
- VR has provided youth receiving subminimum wage employment training opportunities to encourage their consideration of competitive integrated employment opportunities. VR offers a four-hour course focused on self-advocacy, communication, employment options in local communities, how to obtain supports and services and other related topics.

Goal 3: Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR Counselors, Community Rehabilitation service staff, families and individuals.

VR will:

- Increase supported employment training opportunities for VR counselors, providers, families and individuals.
- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for VR employees and APD.
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities.
- Participate as an advisory member on a variety of grants from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that provide training and collaborative activities for providers, counselors and other agency employees.

Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services.

VR will:

- Participate as a key member of the Employment First Interagency Committee. This committee is composed of nine agencies/organizations. The focus is on competitive integrated employment as a preferred option for youth and adults. The group also works on a statewide level to leverage and collaborate on the use of resources to benefit all individuals served by the agencies. This includes mutual training, technical assistance, advocacy and other mutually beneficial activities.
- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the extended service resources they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding ongoing support through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports and Social Security Work Incentives as possible resources for ongoing supports.
- Encourage the use of employer and natural supports.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services.

- Use the Business Relations Team to provide training and technical assistance to employers interested in working with VR customers. They will also develop positive relationships with employers to increase employment opportunities.
- Use the Abilities Work Help Desk as a resource to link employers to qualified job seekers with disabilities. VR is a partner in the development of and administers the Abilities Work Help Desk, a collaboration between the state's Workforce system, DBS and APD.

VR continues to work closely with the Agency for Persons (APD) with Disabilities to assist VR customers in receiving seamless ongoing support services. VR and APD staff are working together to identify mutual customers and coordinate the services needed. VR, APD and the AHCA have recently signed and implemented a Memorandum of Agreement. This agreement will help in the planning for services needed for mutual customers. The joint will work together to help identify the appropriate extended services.

VR continues to expand its services to include Discovery and Customized Placement services to help individuals with most significant disabilities become employed. Discovery improves the quality of the placements, increases the success of the job placements, and reduces the need for intense follow up support. Concentrated efforts are in place to continue to increase capacity across the state.

VR and APD consultants work together to provide training for VR counselors, waiver support coordinators, and for APD field staff on best practices in Supported Employment and the roles and responsibilities of all partners. Training included a focus on all the possible extended service options.

VR may offer youth extended services for up to four years, as necessary.

The Supported Employment administrator provides training to field staff on the multiple options available for extended services. The development of natural and employer supports available on the jobsite has been a specific focus of VR efforts.

VR also continues to work with Department of Children and Families' Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to expand access to funding for supported employment extended services for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness.

(p) State's Strategies

In an effort to address Executive Order 19-31, VR continues to provide support and services that lead to advance knowledge and skills to find meaningful work and productive careers. Specifically, VR provides support for students with disabilities and collaborates with customers in the areas of post-secondary vocational training and education, as well, job training and work- based learning to help individuals move into competitive integrated employment. During the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 20/21, VR assisted businesses and employers with their workforce needs by connecting the talents, skills and abilities of 5,055 customers with disabilities. We maintained the number of hours worked for those closures (29 hours) and the average weekly salary ($380 from $370). Our Return on Investment for each dollar spent increased to $8.73 from $8.34 the previous year.

The legislation that authorizes VR, The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act prioritizes youth transition so that youth with a disability are ready to excel in the workplace. VR has shown its commitment to this vision by increasing the number of individuals we support achieve a high school diploma or a GED by 7%.

Below are some example training programs that assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for 21st century careers:

- Comprehensive Transition Programs include career and technical schools
- High School High-Tech
- BRICK Program
- Agritourist Collaboration
- Career Camps
- Hands on Education
- Project Search
- Industry Readiness Training
- Self-Employment Program

VR Business Representatives will continue to stay current and abreast of the labor market needs to align training and employment opportunities with sector strategies and targeted industries. This leads to pathways that are in high-skill, high-wage and high-demand careers and occupations. VR collaborates with career and technical education, career source, college systems, schools, businesses and the Department of Economic Opportunity, to provide informed choices on career pathways into the 21st labor market.

To reinforce the critical importance of VR in our state's emerging efforts to support workforce, VR is currently updating its policy related to serving individuals with disabilities who have substance use disorders to ensure access to vocational rehabilitation services to help them achieve employment success. Also, VR is collaborating with Agency for Persons with Disabilities to identify and serve individuals with most significant disabilities to provide opportunities for workforce inclusion. VR is a partner in the Employment First initiative along with ten other agencies to ensure the long-term commitment to improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. Additionally, VR is working to expand its current Individual Placement Support Program, which is designed to assist individuals with significant mental health disorders obtain employment.

With regard to the state's investment in Apprenticeship and computer science opportunities, VR will continue to partner with Deloitte and Specialisterne to strengthen its efforts towards building an Autism at Work program, which recruits college graduates with autism into full-time positions in Science, Technology Engineer and Math (STEM) careers including: cyber security, information management systems, computer science, engineering and other IT-related fields. Also, VR partners with targeted industries to deliver work-based learning experiences for youth and adults. For example, Project Search. Project Search is a nationally recognized and trademark internship program for student with most significant disabilities, providing opportunities to complete job rotations in industries, such as healthcare, universities, hospitality and retail.

Moreover, VR will continue to partner with the Brevard Internship in Construction Knowledge (BRICK) program which is a partnership with the Home Builders and Contractor Associations of Brevard and the Northeast Home Builders Association, which offer Work-Base Learning Experiences in construction and trades. Also, we will strengthen collaboration with the Federal Aviation Administration to recruit individuals with disabilities into their Air Traffic Controller Training Program. VR partnered with Aerospace that resulted in a networking and career event with seven business partners to include Lockheed Martin, Collins Aerospace, Bevilacqua Research Corporation (BRC), Lockheed Martin, Jacobs, Micro Systems, Inc., Raytheon, Zel Technologies, VT Mobile Aerospace Engineering, Inc. (ST Engineering), Your TEK Professionals which

created multiple on the job training opportunities and employment.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds
VR recognizes Innovation and Expansion projects as beneficial and complementary to WIOA-related initiatives. Following a formal procurement process, VR will renew contracts for two Innovation and Expansion projects, described below. Contracts for the projects run through SFY 2022.

- The Arc-2-Work: a work-skills training program – Operated by Arc of Alachua County. The Arc-2-Work program is providing pre-employment training and participation in volunteering positions to high school students and clients of the Arc that will foster employment placement for individuals with unique abilities in Alachua County.
- The Industry Readiness Training (IRT) Program – Operated by Brevard Achievement Center. The IRT Program is providing pre-employment training and participation in volunteering positions that will foster employment placement for individuals with unique abilities in Brevard County.

Rehabilitation Technology
Rehabilitation Technology is provided through a contractual agreement with the Center for Assistive, Rehabilitation and Robotics Technologies at the University of South Florida. The program provides rehabilitation technology assessment and evaluation services for VR customers across all stages of the rehabilitation process. Rehabilitation technology includes a range of services and devices that supplement and enhance individual functions. It includes services like job redesign or worksite modifications that improve the work environment.

Assistive Technology Services and Devices
VR sponsors the Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology Project that is directed by the Assistive Technology Advisory Council in accordance with Section 413.407, Florida Statutes. The project provides for the coordination and delivery of appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art assistive technology services and devices on a statewide basis. The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. (FAAST), is a not-for-profit corporation for which the Assistive Technology Advisory Council acts as the board of directors, manages the project and provides administrative and technical support to the council.

FAAST is responsible for administering a low interest loan authority that provides funding to individuals with disabilities who may be unable to qualify for traditional loans and bank financing to purchase assistive technology devices.

Assistive technology includes both devices and services. A device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are available to help people with disabilities in daily living tasks, communication, education, work and recreation.

Expansion and Improvement of Services
Results gained through the Innovation and Expansion projects described above will contribute to increased employment opportunities for VR customers. In addition to the innovation and expansion projects, VR's strategic plan contains the following initiatives anticipated to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relations Program.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

Outreach to Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities and/or who have been Unserved or Underserved
VR continues to assess its services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who may be unserved or underserved, as well as those with the most significant disabilities who may be from minority populations. VR will be completing its next CSNA during FFY2021-22, which will further identify unserved and/ or underserved groups, as well as recommendations for how to better serve these groups. Strategic projects and local-level outreach activities to ensure services to minorities and unserved/ underserved groups include the following:

- Implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities with community/faith-based organizations. Develop contact lists of faith-based and other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities.
- Continue to identify outreach activities conducted by VR area offices for underrepresented populations. Conduct outreach in local communities to promote VR as an agency and help individuals with disabilities who are minorities or who may be unserved or underserved to return or remain in the workplace.
- Continue to conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families through contracts with community-based organizations and other partners.

Continue to implement activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe. VR currently collaborates with the Department of Juvenile Justice and Foster Care to ensure access to pre-employment transition services for student with disabilities in institutional settings. VR is in partnership with the Department of Corrections to collaborate on the Adult Re-entry and Employment Strategic Planning Program Grant to identify strategies for connecting re-entry citizens to employment.

Improving and Expanding VR Services for Students with Disabilities
WIOA provides great opportunities for VR to increase transition services and opportunities to youth with disabilities. Increased information and referral to transition age youth is built into WIOA and VR has already begun providing more transition service-related information to youth. Strategies noted below are anticipated to increase opportunities for students with disabilities.

- Continue to offer Work-Based Learning Experiences to all school districts annually. Although VR approaches and offers WBLE partnerships to all school districts in Florida, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR has recently hired another transition administrator to ensure that information is provided consistently to all school districts and to coordinate and monitor active and potential WBLE partnerships.
- Continue to provide activities for youth and students designed to assist in developing a concept of work, navigating the community and obtaining work experience during high school. Pre-ETS include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, career guidance and counseling, work readiness and self-advocacy training and experiential activities such as community-based work experience. Support services include assistive technology and services, transportation and uniforms. Intensive services are designed for those who need additional support with appropriate work behavior, require repetition to acquire skills, build endurance to work and identify the right fit or environment for work. These services include Discovery, Youth Peer Mentoring, Project SEARCH, services provided under Work-Based Learning Experiences with school districts and tuition, books and supplies for postsecondary education programs.
- Additional initiatives are under way to increase provider capacity and offer more opportunities to youth. These include approval of CareerSource Florida to provide pre-placement services, revision of Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTAC) recertification procedures and increase in CBTAC and Discovery providers. VR partners with Volunteer Florida, Centers for Independent Living, Florida ARC and High School High Tech to offer more OJT and community work experiences.

Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs
VR assesses its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements. Results of the FFY 2018-19 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment CSNA) indicate a need to develop service providers in the rural areas of the state, particularly providers for supported and customized employment, as well as providers that are skilled in working with individuals with the most significant disabilities. The CSNA also identified a need to develop providers that can sign and have experience working with Deaf individuals.

VR has increased its number of registered CRPs from 154 in 2017 to 342, as of January 2021. Each new provider went through stringent vetting, including background screening, and attended mandatory onboarding before being approved to deliver services. VR's Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services continues to engage service providers on a quarterly basis through face-to-face meetings, area wide provider trainings and Provider Engagement Conference Calls.

Recognizing the need to develop a service delivery model that would allow the flexibility and creativity necessary to better serve our customers, a cross functional team of VR staff worked together to develop a new service delivery model and rate structure. This new structure incentivizes better outcomes, such as higher pay; allows for payment sooner in the process; incorporates Individual Placement Services; and creates distinct Pre-ETS benchmarks. The new model has been shared with stakeholders, including all current service providers. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

VR is also in the process of developing an e-referral system that will allow service providers to receive referrals and bill for services electronically. The new system will replace multiple standalone systems, thereby streamlining the process and relieving some of the undue administrative burden currently felt by our providers. VR implemented the new e-referral system in February 2021.

Strategies to Improve the Performance Related to Goals, Priorities and Performance Indicators
Figure 9.05
Federal Standards and Indicators

Federal Performance Indicators and Targets	Actual Performance (PY 20)	Previous (PY 19)
Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	-335	+265
Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	38.54%	37.9%
Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	73.35%	96.94%
Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	90.07%	92.56%
Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)	57.75%	55%
Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	47.80%	54.53%
Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	97.95%	94%

VR collaborates with partners at the state and local levels to maximize employment services for people with disabilities. VR anticipates that the following projects will have a positive impact on program performance.

- Support employers and community partnerships through the Business Relations program.
- Expand the Youth Peer Mentoring pilot to all VR areas.
- Provide Career Counseling / Information and Referral services to individuals participating in subminimum wage employment. Due to the positive response to CCIR services, VR is developing an orientation and follow-up process for CCIR service recipients who expressed interest in VR services.
- Assist customers in making informed choices about employment providers through use of the Service Provider Choice Directory.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the capacity for providing Discovery and Customized Employment services.

- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support. Purchase these services when not available from SSA.
- Expand data validation practices to decrease the number of cases reported as enrolled in an education or training program
- Perform quality assurance reviews to increase the number of skill gains recorded in case files
- Conduct staff training that focuses on thorough evaluation of cases before reporting enrollment along with diligent follow-up and consistent case documentation practices.
- Improve case management system architecture to increase data quality surrounding enrollments in education and training programs

Strategies for the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities
WIOA presents requirements and opportunities for VR to strengthen its partnership with entities of the Statewide Workforce Development System. In addition to requirements outlined in WIOA, the following strategies will increase partnerships with the statewide workforce development system to further help job seekers with disabilities.

- Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of the one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
- Collaborate with and offer training to CareerSource Florida and Employment Networks to provide services.
- Continue area directors' and representatives' participation on the local Workforce Boards.
- Continue to promote VR's presence in CareerSource Florida through co-location of VR units in One-Stop Career Centers, employees being out-stationed and/or through regular visits by VR employees to One-Stop Career Centers.
- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program services. SSA contracted networks are insufficient in quantity and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity.

Equitable Access
Since 2013, VR has made great progress in accommodation and access to services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specific accomplishments include completion of revised best practices guides for services and communication, as well as hiring a specialized consultant in the field of deaf-blindness to develop best practices, provide consultation, training and advocacy with stakeholders involved in these cases.

Key administrators from VR and DBS held monthly meetings to revise and update the Memorandum of Agreement, develop strategies, discuss training needs, create informational guides needed by both agencies for this population and provide case consultation. Additional VR strategies and activities to increase equal access to individuals requesting services are as follows:

- Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid information, furniture inspection instructions and a facility security/building access policy at HQ.
- Continue to use interpreters and translators and VR's online resources as well as the websites of other partners and stakeholders (where permitted) to reach underserved populations and increase communication with customers.
- Offer reasonable accommodations to give equal access to services and make sure materials and other program information are available in English, Spanish and Haitian-Creole for various agencies, employers, churches, community leaders, health clinics and other settings.
- Continue to assign counselors and consultants to serve specialized populations, such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing, transition students, mental health customers and brain and spinal cord injury customers.
- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other One-stop system partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with the intent to include universal design as a separate component of the One-stop career center certification process.

(q) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

VR, in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), established four strategic goals for FFY 2019. These goals and priorities were developed based on an analysis of VR's performance on the federal standards and indicators, the preliminary results of the statewide needs assessment and input from customers, providers and other stakeholders.

The following section provides VR's evaluation and report of progress towards achieving its strategic goals.

Review of Current Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1. Enhance employment opportunities through individualized services to meet workforce demands and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Objective 1.1 Expand service delivery options.

Strategy 1.1.1 Enhance services for individuals with the most significant disabilities to assist them to avoid, or transition from, subminimum wage employment, by expanding service delivery options with the goal of competitive, integrated employment, such as: supported employment, CCIR, customized employment and Discovery.

Strategy 1.1.2 Enhance services for individuals with severe psychiatric disabilities by expanding Individual Placement and Support to additional areas via strengthened partnerships.

Strategy 1.1.3 Strengthen the Business Relations program, including implementation of technical assistance provided by WINTAC.

Performance Measures

- Customer satisfaction survey results
- Increased employment outcomes
- Increased business engagement and retention

Actual Performance:

Objective 1.1 Expand service delivery options.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20
Overall satisfaction with VR	82.0%	81.4%
Overall satisfaction – closed successfully	89.6%	90.9%
Overall satisfaction – closed unsuccessfully	68.9%	70.4%
Satisfaction with services	82.0%	81.3%
Satisfaction with services – closed successfully	87.9%	88.9%
Satisfaction with services – closed unsuccessfully	63.2%	66.7%
Choice of services	85.0%	84.1%
Choice of services – closed successfully	91.4%	88.9%
Choice of services – closed unsuccessfully	77.7%	75.3%
Choice of service providers	83.1%	82.2%
Choice of service providers – closed successfully	88.0%	89.3%
Choice of service providers – closed unsuccessfully	73.6%	72.2%
Information about choices	84.8%	83.2%
Information about choices – closed successfully	89.6%	90.1%
Information about choices – closed unsuccessfully	73.6%	76.7%

Objective 1.1 Expand service delivery options.

Increased employment outcomes

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20 - 21
Second quarter employment rate	47%	53.8%	48.6%
Median monthly earnings	$3,459	$3,626	$3,750
Measurable skill rate	3.6%	15.7%	28.2%
Number of employment outcomes	5,924	5,389	5,055

Objective 1.1 Expand service delivery options.

Increased provider capacity

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Discovery/Customized Employment	135	126	110
CBTAC	36	37	44
Project SEARCH	36	38	46
Schools doing WBLE	32	32	47
Schools in STAR	64	73	73
Peer Mentoring	36	43	43
Supported Employment	249	251	251

Objective 1.2 Improve communication with customers.

Strategy 1.2.1 Update publications and brochures to be more informative and user-friendly.

Strategy 1.2.2 Revise VR's website for ease of use, clarity of information and accessibility.

Strategy 1.2.3 Implement a data-driven case review process to verify that contact timeframes are adhered to.

Performance Measures:

- Improved customer satisfaction survey results
- Reduced number of "no contact" closures
- Increased employment outcomes
- Reduced number of valid communication complaints made to the Ombudsman Unit

Actual Performance:

Objective 1.2 Improve communication with customers.

Customer satisfaction survey results

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20
Time for VRC to respond	78.1%	77.9%
Time for VRC to respond – closed successfully	86.1%	85.2%
Time for VRC to respond – closed unsuccessfully	68.9%	70.6%
Problems with communication	51.5%	no data
Problems with communication – closed successfully	47.7%	no data
Problems with communication – closed unsuccessfully	58.6%	

Objective 1.2 Improve communication with customers.

Customer satisfaction survey results

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20
Ease of contacting VRC	82.9%	82.5%
Ease of contacting VRC – closed successfully	88.3%	86.2%
Ease of contacting VRC – closed unsuccessfully	73.0%	77.6%
Customer believes case was closed because of lack of communication	24.0%	28%

Objective 1.2 Improve communication with customers.

Reduced number of "no contact" closures

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
"No contact" closures	31.0%	28.3%	30%

Goal 2. Increase organizational effectiveness by reducing complexity, streamlining processes and encouraging a flexible, supportive workplace culture.

Objective 2.1 Streamline internal systems/processes.

Strategy 2.1.1 Simplify service delivery by creating a new electronic referral system that manages referrals to providers, documentation of services provided and payment processes.

Strategy 2.1.2 Implement a new case management system that streamlines case documentation, accountability and reporting.

Performance Measures:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Increased employment outcomes

Actual Performance:

Objective 2.1 Streamline internal systems/processes.

Reduced turnover rate

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Turnover rate	34.8%	29.9%	23%

Objective 2.1 Streamline internal systems/processes.

Improved climate survey results

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20
Workload is manageable	64.8%	67.29%

Objective 2.1 Expand service delivery options.

Increased employment outcomes

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Second quarter employment rate	47%	53.8%	48.6%
Median monthly earnings	$3,459	$3,626	$3,750
Measurable skill rate	3.6%	15.7%	28.2%
Number of employment outcomes	5,924	5,389	5,055

Objective 2.2 Enhance availability and use of data.

Strategy 2.2.1 Improve data integrity by continuing to incorporate internal controls for data collection and reporting.

Strategy 2.2.2 Continue to improve ease of access to data to facilitate data-driven decision-making.

Performance Measures:

- Increased compliance with statutory requirements
- Reduced number of errors in data collection and reporting

Actual Performance:

Objective 2.2 Enhance availability and use of data.

Increased compliance with statutory requirements

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Compliance rate with 60 days	97%	98.6%	98.92%
Compliance rate with 90 days	93%	97.3%	98.8%

Objective 2.2 Enhance availability and use of data.

Measure of Success: Reduced number of errors in data collection and reporting

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Reduced number of errors in data collection and reporting.	No data available		

Goal 3. Stabilize the VR workforce through improved quality of life for staff.

Objective 3.1 Develop the capacity of existing resources.

Strategy 3.1.1 Increase the availability and quality of training for all staff and all positions.

Strategy 3.1.2 Evaluate positions, roles and organization of staff to maximize effectiveness and efficiency, including simplifying responsibilities via technical assistance from WINTAC.

Performance Measures:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Improved employment outcomes

Actual Performance:

Objective 3.1 Develop the capacity of existing resources.

Measure of success: reduced turnover rate

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Turnover rate	34.8%	29.9%	23%

Objective 3.1 Develop the capacity of existing resources.

Improved climate survey results

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20
Satisfied with in-house training.	72.06%	70.39%
Someone at work encourages my development.	83.8%	82.64%
I am provided with opportunities for growth and development.	71.5%	73.64%

Objective 3.1 Expand service delivery options.

Measure of success: increased employment outcomes

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Second quarter employment rate	47%	53.8%	48.6%
Median monthly earnings	$3,459	$3,626	$3,750
Measurable skill rate	3.6%	15.7%	28.2%
Number of employment outcomes	5,924	5,389	5,055

Objective 3.2 Incentivize high quality performance.

Strategy 3.2.1 Explore options for improving compensation for staff members.

Performance Measures:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results

Actual Performance:

Objective 3.2 Incentivize high quality performance

Measure of success: reduced turnover rate

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Turnover rate	34.8%	29.9%	23%

Objective 3.2 Incentivize high quality performance.

Improved climate survey results

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20
I work a second job for additional income to support family or pay off debt.	87.5%	88.30%
The salary and benefits I receive are fair compensation for my job duties.	33.3%	32.25%

Goal 4. Maximize engagement with partners to enhance access to services for improved service delivery.

Objective 4.1 Document and implement partnerships.

Strategy 4.1.1 Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with CareerSource Florida, and its local boards, by collaborating on and implementing memorandums of understanding and infrastructure funding agreements to streamline services for job seekers and businesses.

Strategy 4.1.2 Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with state and local education agencies by collaborating on and implementing mechanisms to streamline services for students with disabilities.

Strategy 4.1.2 Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with state agencies that serve individuals with developmental and/or mental health disabilities by collaborating on and implementing mechanisms to streamline services for students with disabilities.

Performance Measures:

- Increased number of individuals served via partnerships
- Increased employment outcomes

Actual Performance:

Objective 4.1 Expand service delivery options.

Increased employment outcomes

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Second quarter employment rate	47%	53.8%	48.6%
Median monthly earnings	$3,459	$3,626	$3,750
Measurable skill rate	3.6%	15.7%	28.2%
Number of employment outcomes	5,924	5,389	5,055

Objective 4.1 Document and implement partnerships.

Increased number of individuals served via partnerships

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
# receiving Job Exploration Counseling	7,234	6,557	2,378
# receiving WBLE	2,533	3,431	4,643
# receiving Workplace Readiness Training	1,326	1,514	3,258
# receiving Instruction in Self-Advocacy	478	1,078	2,301
# receiving Graduate College/University Training	29	20	30
# receiving Four-Year College or University Training	3,057	3,108	2,918
# receiving Junior or Community College Training	1,593	1,440	1,098
# receiving Occupational or Vocational Training	1,097	850	612
# receiving On-the-Job Training	1,762	2,483	1,931
# receiving Basic Remedial/Literacy Training	147	113	69
# receiving Job Readiness Training	35	71	69
# receiving Miscellaneous Training	1,155	1,509	601
# receiving Job Search Assistance	3,019	3,393	2,606
# receiving Job Placement Assistance	4,100	3,973	3,292
# receiving Short Term Job Supports	64	68	77
# receiving Supported Employment Services	2,013	2,069	1,800
# receiving Benefits Counseling	2,542	2,719	1,310
# receiving Customized Employment Services	4,748	4,121	3,242
# receiving Transportation	5,390	4,837	1,378
# of customers receiving Rehabilitation Technology	2,291	2,050	1,879
# of customers receiving Technical Assistance	168	140	140
# of customers receiving Interpreter Services	1,338	1,239	825
# of units that are adjacent to CSF	6	6	8
# of CSF offices that have VR presence	6	6/3	6
# of units that are co-located at CSF	3	2	3

Objective 4.2 Enhance the effectiveness of partnerships.

Strategy 4.2.1 Increase the availability and quality of training for partner organizations.

Performance Measures:

- Increased capacity of partners
- Increased employment outcomes

Actual Performance:

Objective 4.2 Enhance the effectiveness of partnerships

Increased capacity of partners

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
# of Employment Services providers on-boarded	no data		
# of trainings for providers	no data		

Objective 4.2 Expand service delivery options.

Increased employment outcomes

Measure	PY 18 - 19	PY 19 - 20	PY 20-21
Second quarter employment rate	47%	53.8%	48.6%
Median monthly earnings	$3,459	$3,626	$3,750
Measurable skill rate	3.6%	15.7%	28.2%
Number of employment outcomes	5,924	5,389	5,055

Explanation of Performance:
Strategies that contributed to achievement of goals and priorities

Following the previously established planning process, VR Senior Leaders regularly review progress and update strategies as needed. Annually, the Senior Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan, and then held a planning meeting to determine which projects to include in the updated strategic plan. Strategy updates are provided quarterly and reported out to VR Leadership and stakeholders.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) completed their monitoring visit with VR in April 2017. In addition, VR completed its Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which informed agency planning in FFYs 2020-23. VR updated its strategic goals and priorities after receipt of the RSA Monitoring Report and completion of the CSNA. Currently, VR agency priorities are to ensure IT systems are fully capable of collecting data required for federal reporting, and to refine its service delivery procedures to meet Pre-ETS budget requirements while continuing to meet the needs of other customers.

Smooth operation of the strategic planning process is in part due to VR senior leaders' commitment to provide all supports necessary for project teams to be successful. Senior leaders also realize the value of feedback received from VR customers, personnel, stakeholders and concerned citizens. Arrangements are in place so that anyone can provide feedback on the state plan, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using a dedicated email address on the Florida VR website, rehabworks.org/plans.shtml. The email address is vrplan@vr.fldoe.org. Concerted effort has also been made to standardize and streamline VR operational processes and procedures, such as staff development, planning, IT governance and development schedules, and business intelligence functions.

Barriers that impeded achievement of goals and priorities
Despite obstacles such as changes to waitlist management, fiscal strains, global pandemic impacts, preparing for and implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, staff turnover and rising caseload sizes, VR made great progress towards achieving its strategic projects and agency priorities. When waitlist categories were closed due to fiscal and human resource deficits, field staff used this time to reconnect and engage customers, as well as close cases for customers no longer interested in services. Budget and caseload projection models were also developed during this time and have allowed VR to better manage and plan.

Preparing for WIOA implementation forced VR to reexamine its business processes and organizational structure, which has resulted in more efficient and standardized operations. It allows VR to develop true partnerships and connections with other employment-focused entities. These improvements, borne out of necessity, have increased VR's ability to plan, as well as to be flexible when barriers are encountered.

Figure 9.06
WIOA Performance Indicators

	Vocational Rehabilitation Program						
	Program Year: 2019	Program Year: 2020		Program Year: 2022		Program Year: 2023	
	Actual Level	Negotiated Level	Actual Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	53.8%	NA	48.6%	48.6%	N/A	48.6%	N/A
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	50.7%	NA	47.9	47.9%	N/A	47.9%	N/A
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$3,626	NA	$3,750	$3,750	N/A	$3,750	N/A
Credential Attainment Rate	6.4%	NA	9.0%	9.0%	N/A	9.0%	N/A
Measurable Skill Gains	15.7%	16%	28.2%	28.2%	N/A	28.2%	N/A

Explanation of Performance:
VR has made a concerted effort to improve performance on Measurable Skill Gains, including refining internal controls and providing intensive training and guidance to staff to ensure that the data reported is accurate and indicative of the progress VR customers are making.

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities
VR continues to use funds designated under this section to support the functions of the FRC and Florida Independent Living Council and to support opportunities for improving the efficiency of service delivery.

Actual Performance:
VR continues to support and collaborate with the FRC and FILC as required in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In SFY 2020-21, a total of 12,717 independent living plans were developed, and 14,797 independent living goals were set through the network of 16 Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs served a total of 14,791 individuals with significant disabilities. Information and Referral services were provided to approximately 18,724 individuals and Community Transition Assistance was provided to 29 individuals.

Explanation of Performance:
These collaborative efforts helped strengthen leadership and improve services, which led to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It is anticipated that the new Innovation and Expansion projects will contribute positively to VR's rehabilitation rate and provide more informed customer choice and options.

Evaluation of Supported Employment Program

Review of Section (n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI-B Funds in 2020-21
VR is committed to providing quality Supported Employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR collaborates and contracts with community rehabilitation providers across the state of Florida. VR has focused this year on increasing the quality and capacity of the employment providers. VR may now provide Supported Employment services for up to 24 months, if necessary.

VR has also focused on expanding services to Transition Youth. The Career Exploration, Workplace Readiness, Community-Based Work Experiences, Self-Advocacy, Youth Peer Mentoring and Postsecondary Educational Counseling are all services that were expanded to assist youth in their eventual pursuit of employment.

VR may also offer youth extended services for up to four years, as necessary and as funds permit.

- VR continues to provide Supported Employment Services on a statewide basis through Title VI- B funds, and with Title I funds when Title VI-B funds are expended.
- Fully expend Title VI-B funds for the provision of Supported Employment services after reserving no more than 2.5% for program administration.
- Provide a variety of training and outreach programs designed to increase the awareness of Supported Employment as an appropriate vocational program for individuals with most significant disabilities.
- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs using successful strategies.

Supported Employment services were provided to adults and youth who required these services on a statewide basis. Supported Employment funds were used to pay for Placement, Stabilization, Transition, and placement for successful Employment Outcomes. Funds were fully expended on services. Five percent or less was used to support program administration.

VR increased training opportunities for individuals, youth, counselors, providers and other stakeholders to promote Supported Employment services as a first and preferred service option. Transition Youth services were expanded to offer an array of services that would support youth in pursuing competitive integrated employment opportunities. Fifty percent of the Title VI B funding was expended on youth 24 and under.

VR developed and implemented a Career Counseling Information and Referral Course for individuals participating in subminimum wage employment in 14 (C) entities as required under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. This course provides information that allow individuals to make an informed choice about current and future employment opportunities. Approximately 3,000 individuals participated in this training opportunity. Individuals who stated an interest in pursuing VR services will be provided the information and support needed to apply for VR services.

VR staff have worked with Employment First Partners, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Project 10 staff, local Education Agencies and other partners to increase Third Party Cooperative Arrangements, Project SEARCH programs and other work experience programs that provide training opportunities that lead to employment.

VR staff have also collaborated with the Florida Association for Rehabilitation Facilities and the ARC of Florida to develop a package of VR services that would assist individuals with most significant disabilities to pursue competitive integrated employment opportunities.

VR worked with National Project SEARCH, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (FARF), University of Wisconsin/Whitewater to develop an Adult Project SEARCH model. This model is designed to encourage and support individuals to transition from sheltered work or provide another option for young adults. It is anticipated that if the project is a success, it will be expanded to other areas of the state. It has been initiated in three areas of the state.

Goal 2: Use Title VI, Part B funds to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities

- Use Title I funds, supplemented with Title VI B funds to provide Supported Employment services as specified in the individual plan for employment.
- Purchase Supported Employment services based upon established performance benchmarks. The contracts for Supported Employment focuses on performance and reinforces the focus on successful outcomes.
- Funds may also be used for related customized employment strategies and supported self-employment services.

VR provided Supported Employment services to individuals with most significant disabilities who requested these services. Data below represents VR's performance in serving Supported Employment customers.

SFY 2020-2021 Supported Employment Performance Data

- Number of active cases: 10,453
- Number of Individualized Plans for Employment: 2,236
- Number of Employment Outcomes: 930

VR has increased the number of Supported Employment Providers throughout Florida. Additional training and support have been provided to new employment providers. VR has also added a Customized Job Placement benchmark to support individuals with most significant disabilities who may need a customized employment option.

VR has also added a Customized Job Placement benchmark to support individuals with most significant disabilities who may need a customized employment option.

of providers eligible to provide this service.

The Supported Employment service was redesigned with additional benchmarks and deliverables to support the long-term success of customers receiving this service.

Goal 3: Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR Counselors, Community Rehabilitation Providers, families and individuals.

- Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR counselors, providers, families and individuals.
- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for VR employees and APD.
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities.
- Participate as an advisory member on a variety of grants from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that provide training and collaborative activities for providers, counselors and other agency employees.

The Supported Employment Senior Consultant continues to provide training on service delivery for individuals with the most significant disabilities to new counselors, as well as follow-up trainings and technical assistance to seasoned counselors and supervisors at conferences, meetings and workshops.

VR Consultants provided training to families and members in the community as requested. These sessions are designed to provide information and a vision that Supported Employment services are designed for individuals with the most significant disabilities. They provide families and customers with the information they need to become successfully employed. The sessions were provided to the groups and organizations listed below. Additional presentations are made throughout the year to local stakeholder groups.

- Florida Developmental Disability Council
- Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Florida ARC Membership
- Florida Rehabilitation Council
- Florida Project SEARCH Sites
- Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultant Area Trainings

- Standing Transition Committees throughout Florida
- Individualized Technical Assistance and Trainings as requested
- Florida Department of Education – Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- Family Café Participants
- Visions Conference Attendees
- Healthy Minds Healthy Futures Conference attendees
- Recovery Oriented System of Care Work Group

VR Program Administrators provide technical assistance and consultations on individual cases as requested by supervisors, family members, VR staff and individual customers.

Several strategies were used to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities listed below.

- Representation on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and Employment Task Force. This included helping develop pilot projects on a wide array of employment topics. Administrators were involved as task force members, on advisory committees, and as monitors of projects. The projects complimented and supported VR's mission of helping individuals prepare for, get or keep a job.
- Presentations on Supported Employment at conferences around the state. Audiences included professionals, families and students regarding employment options.
- Participation as a board member for the Florida Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE).
- Representation on the Statewide Employment First Initiative by VR's Supported Employment and Transition Consultants.
- The VR Program Administrator coordinated and developed training for providers and staff on Discovery and Customized Employment Services.
- Participation in the National Supported Employment Community of Practice (CoP)
- Participation in the National Customized Employment CoP
- Participation in the National Self-Employment CoP
- Representation on the Interagency State Review Team, a partnership of the major youth-serving agencies in the state of Florida. The team coordinates services and support for children/youth in Florida and collaborates on developing necessary local and statewide resources for children/youth being served by multiple agencies.
- Participation on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Block Grant Advisory Council. The council advises the Department of Children and Families on the allocation of services and creating a plan that supports the treatments and supports for recovery and a life in the community.
- Participation in the International Individual Placement and Support Learning Community and local (Broward County, FL) IPS Learning Community.
- Participation in the ASPIRE (Advancing State Policy Integration for Recovery and Employment) to promote alignment of policies and practices across state agencies in support of competitive integrated employment for individuals with mental health conditions.

VR initiated and implemented training opportunities for adults who were participating in subminimum wage employment. This service was provided in collaboration with 14 (C) employers and community providers. Three thousand individuals received Career Counseling Information and Referral Services during the first year of the program. This course is designed to promote competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services

- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the resources for extended service they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding extended services through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports and Social Security Work Incentives.
- Encourage the use of employer and natural supports as a resource for extended services.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in Supported Employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services.
- Use the Business Relations Team to provide training and technical assistance to employers interested in working with VR customers. They will also develop positive relationships with employers to increase employment opportunities.
- Use the Abilities Work Help Desk as a resource to link employers to qualified jobseekers with disabilities. VR is a partner in the development of and administers the Abilities Work Help Desk, a collaboration between the state's Workforce system, DBS and APD.

VR continues to work closely with the Agency for Persons (APD) with Disabilities to assist VR customers in receiving seamless ongoing support services. VR and APD staff are working together to identify mutual customers and coordinate the needed services.

VR continues to expand its services to include Discovery and Customized Placement services to help individuals with most significant disabilities become employed. Discovery improves the quality of the placements, increases the success of the job placements, and reduces the need for intense follow up supports. Concentrated efforts are in place to continue to increase capacity across the state.

VR and APD consultants work together to provide training for VR counselors, waiver support coordinators and for APD field staff on best practices in Supported Employment and the roles and responsibilities of all partners. Training included a focus on all of the possible extended service options.

VR may offer youth extended services for up to four years, as necessary.

The Supported Employment administrator provides training to field staff on the multiple options available for extended services. The development of natural and employer supports available on the jobsite has been a specific focus of VR efforts.

VR also continues to work with Department of Children and Families' Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to expand access to funding for supported employment extended services for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness.

(r) Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Quality

VR is committed to providing quality Supported Employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR supports the individual in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests. The scope of services varies based on the amount, intensity and support needed by each individual.

VR counselors work in partnership with the individual when developing the Individualized Plan for Employment. This plan guides the services and supports that are needed for that individual. The IPE is evaluated throughout the process and updated as needed.

The quality of Supported Employment outcomes is assessed individually. Each individual receives services that are determined based on the specific needs of that person. A key component of evaluating the service is the individual satisfaction with the services and supports, as well as a successful employment outcome.

VR makes every effort to provide opportunities for individuals to provide their feedback on the services they received from VR. This feedback is useful information in adjusting and improving VR services to better meet their needs. There are formal service surveys, public hearings and satisfaction surveys. The VR counselor has regular communications with the individual and the Supported Employment provider to monitor, provide counseling and assist the individual, as needed.

VR recognizes that it is important to get feedback from the employer and provider's perspectives to determine the quality of service and make necessary improvements. They are also encouraged to let VR know at any point if support is needed.

Scope

The scope of Supported Employment services varies based on the amount, intensity and type of support each person may need to obtain and maintain a job. VR provides the intensive initial services needed to help an individual with a most significant disability obtain and maintain a job of his/her choice.

Supported Employment makes possible competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities and for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and because of the severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to maintain their jobs.

Service limits have recently been increased from 18 months to 24 months. Under special circumstances, the customer and VR counselor may jointly agree in writing to extend the time, when doing so will achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Services are individually designed around the needs and desires of the individual and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Initial placement
- Stabilization in the workplace
- Job coaching
- Assistive technology
- Specialized Job Training
- Social Skills Training
- Discovery
- Establishing formal and informal worksite-related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication)
- Supported Self-Employment
- Customized Job Placement

VR has added Discovery as a service option to its array of Supported Employment services. It offers a more thorough person-centered planning approach for those individuals with the most significant and complex disabilities who may need a more customized approach to employment.

VR has also added a customized job placement option for individuals in Supported Employment who may need a more individualized job development process. Individuals receiving Supported Employment services will have access to this service as needed.

Post-Employment supports and services may be provided when an intensive need arises during the provision of ongoing extended services. This may occur when job duties substantially change, the work environment is altered, or the impact of the individual's disability increases.

Extent

VR will continue to expand Supported Employment services by educating community members, providers, and relevant stakeholders on the need and advantages that Supported Employment provides for individuals and employers.

Supported Employment services are available for individuals with most significant needs who meet the criteria for VR services and supports.

VR has increased its focus on youth and expanded its Transition Youth services to begin at age 14. In addition, VR has increased several initiatives designed for youth with most significant disabilities. The following experiences are anticipated to help youth in their desire to have a successful career.

- High School High Tech
- Project Search
- Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs
- Third Party Cooperative Transition Agreements

Pre-Employment Transition Services
The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. These evidence-based applications of learning, which include internships and other work experiences, often lead to successful employment.

VR also provides the opportunity for youth to receive up to four years of extended services funded through VR, when necessary. This is the only situation where VR is permitted to provide extended services.

VR will continue to actively engage and partner in order to:

- Develop a collaborative agreement with APD specific to Supported Employment and removing or reducing barriers for employment for individuals with significant disabilities.
- Implement the Interagency Employment First Agreement between the nine signatory parties. Continue to implement the agreements at the local and state level with appropriate stakeholders.
- Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring an efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, and coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services available for youth and adults.
- Expand available services through youth-related initiatives.
- Seek additional resources for extended services through collaborations with agency partners, including APD, Agency for Healthcare Administration, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Department of Education agencies and other stakeholders.
- Collaborate with community organizations, employers, families and support groups to develop natural supports for Supported Employment extended services.
- Distribute information and train counselors about Social Security Work Incentives. Increase awareness of using a Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency or other work incentives as an option for funding extended services. Include training on the new Able Act as a potential way for individuals to fund their own services.

Provide opportunities for counselors, providers and support coordinators to receive training on innovative employment strategies designed to promote employment success for individuals.

Extended Services

VR's approach for Supported Employment uses the nationally accepted "best practices" models of Supported Employment services and has added new customized strategies as well. The key to the approach is an emphasis on person-centered planning and facilitation of natural supports. Individualized job development is conducted and based on job-matching assessments, informed choice, strengths, interests and skills. Individuals are assisted with employment planning and placement by selected providers. Job skills training is provided at the job site either by job coaches or through natural supports of existing resources.

Transition to Extended Services occurs when an individual has sufficient time to learn the tasks and is comfortable in the work culture, has had the supports addressed and is satisfied with the type of work and work hours. At the time of transition, the counselor, providers, individual and others, as applicable, will have agreed that the individual is stable in their employment and expected to succeed. VR counselors confirm this information with the individual, provider and employer. They will continue to monitor the case until the person reaches a successful employment outcome of a minimum of 90 days of stabilized employment after transitioning to extended services.

VR continues to:

- Collaborate with community organizations, families and support groups to develop natural supports as an option for assisting customers on the job site.
- Participate on interagency committees to expand initiatives and increase employment outcomes.
- Seek additional resources for extended services in collaboration with VR partners.
- Emphasize providing services to all racial/ethnic minorities.
- Distribute and provide technical assistance to counselors on the use of Social Security Work
- Incentives to help with funding extended services.

Extended services are provided and/or funded by sources other than VR. VR works collaboratively with other state agencies and organizations to ensure that extended support services, identified on the individualized plan as needed for employment, are available for as long as the customer needs them.

A program administrator serves as a statewide coordinator who monitors Supported Employment issues that arise in the field and serves as a resource person to field staff. The coordinator also assists leadership when implementing programmatic policies in accordance with federal mandates, developing effective programs, recommending training for Supported Employment staff and other liaison duties, objective as requested.

OMB Approval No. 0348-0040

ASSURANCES - NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0348-0040), Washington, DC 20503

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Note: Certain of these assurances may not be applicable to your project or program. If you have questions, please contact the awarding agency. Further, certain Federal awarding agencies may require applicants to certify to additional assurances. If such is the case, you will be notified.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant I certify that the applicant:

1. Has the legal authority to apply for Federal assistance, and the institutional, managerial and financial capability (including funds sufficient to pay the non-Federal share of project cost) to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of the project described in this application.

2. Will give the awarding agency, the Comptroller General of the United States, and if appropriate, the State, through any authorized representative, access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the award; and will establish a proper accounting system in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards or agency directives.

3. Will establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain.

4. Will initiate and complete the work within the applicable time frame after receipt of approval of the awarding agency.

5. Will comply with the Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. ∋∋4728-4763) relating to prescribed standards for merit systems for programs funded under one of the 19 statutes or regulations specified in Appendix A of OPM's Standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration (5 C.F.R. 900, Subpart F).

6. Will comply with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination. These include but are not limited to: (a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin; (b) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. ∋∋1681-1683, and 1685-1686), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; (c) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. ∋794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicaps; (d) the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. ∋∋ 6101-6107), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age; (e) the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-255), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of drug abuse; (f) the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-616), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of alcohol abuse or alcoholism; (g) ∋∋ 523 and 527 of the Public Health Service Act of 1912 (42 U.S.C. ∋∋ 290 dd-3 and 290 ee 3), as amended, relating to confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records; (h) Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. ∋ 3601 et seq.), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing; (i) any other nondiscrimination provisions in the specific statute(s) under which application for Federal assistance is being made; and (j) the requirements of any other nondiscrimination statute(s) which may apply to the application.

7. Will comply, or has already complied, with the requirements of Titles II and III of the uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-646) which provide for fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced or whose property is acquired as a result of Federal or federally assisted programs. These requirements apply to all interests in real property acquired for project purposes regardless of Federal participation in purchases.

8. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. ∋∋1501-1508 and 7324-7328) which limit the political activities of employees whose principal employment activities are funded in whole or in part with Federal funds.

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9. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. ȝȝ276a to 276a-7), the Copeland Act (40 U.S.C. ȝ276c and 18 U.S.C. ȝȝ874) and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. ȝȝ 327-333), regarding labor standards for federally assisted construction subagreements.

10. Will comply, if applicable, with flood insurance purchase requirements of Section 102(a) of the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-234) which requires recipients in a special flood hazard area to participate in the program and to purchase flood insurance if the total cost of insurable construction and acquisition is $10,000 or more.

11. Will comply with environmental standards which may be prescribed pursuant to the following: (a) institution of environmental quality control measures under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) and Executive Order (EO) 11514; (b) notification of violating facilities pursuant to EO 11738; (c) protection of wetlands pursuant to EO 11990; (d) evaluation of flood hazards in floodplains in accordance with EO 11988; (e) assurance of project consistency with the approved State management program developed under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. ȝȝ1451 et seq.); (f) conformity of Federal actions to State (Clear Air) Implementation Plans under Section 176(c) of the Clear Air Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. ȝȝ7401 et seq.); (g) protection of underground sources of drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended, (P.L. 93-523); and (h) protection of endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, (P.L. 93-205).

12 Will comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. ȝȝ1721 et seq.) related to protecting components or potential components of the national wild and scenic rivers system.

13. Will assist the awarding agency in assuring compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. ȝ470), EO 11593 (identification and protection of historic properties), and the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. ȝȝ469a-1 et seq.).

14. Will comply with P.L. 93-348 regarding the protection of human subjects involved in research, development, and related activities supported by this award of assistance.

15. Will comply with the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-544, as amended, 7 U.S.C. ȝȝ2131 et seq.) pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of warm blooded animals held for research, teaching, or other activities supported by this award of assistance.

16. Will comply with the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. ȝȝ4801 et seq.) which prohibits the use of lead-based paint in construction or rehabilitation of residence structures.

17. Will cause to be performed the required financial and compliance audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and OMB Circular No. A-133, AAudits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations.≡

18. Will comply with all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations and policies governing this program.

Signature of Authorized Certifying Individual	Title
Richard Corcoran Richard Corcoran (Feb 8, 2022 20:02 EST) **Commissioner Richard Corcoran**	**Commissioner**
Applicant Organization	**Date Submitted**
Florida Department of Education	Feb 8, 2022

X. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS – FLORIDA DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES

(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

The Florida Division of Blind Services (FDBS) collaborates with the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB) in serving individuals with visual impairments. The FRCB is an integral part of helping FDBS improve services and achieve its goals by reviewing, analyzing, and advising on policy decisions. The FRCB functions to create a positive impact on the fairness, efficiency and accessibility of services through the evaluation of consumer feedback and FDBS' performance.

The Council welcomed 10 newly appointed members in May 2021. As of November 2021, the Council has seven active voting members and twelve vacancies. Robert L. Doyle, director of FDBS, serves as an ex-officio member of the Council. Vacant seats include representatives from advocacy groups, business/industry, State Educational Agency, State Workforce Investment Board, and the Independent Living Council. The Council continues to encourage appointees to apply and monitors the action by the Governor's office to encourage timely appointments and reappointments. Recruitment of new applicants focuses on individuals who are passionate, dedicated and interested in improving the lives of Floridians with visual impairments.

The Council held four business meetings during 2020: February 6-7 (Tallahassee), May 27 (teleconference), July 23 (virtual Microsoft Teams meeting) and October 29 (virtual Microsoft Teams meeting). The Council held four virtual business meetings during 2021 (February 25, May 27, July 29 and October 28). The FRCB is required to hold a public forum at least twice a year; there was a total of seven public forums for 2020 and 2021. The public forums give consumers around the state an opportunity to provide input that encourages optimal services. The Council continues to focus on increasing awareness during public forums through collaboration with FDBS and stakeholders in each host district.

The Council oversees the development and implementation of the Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS). The FRCB contracts with Dr. Minna Jia, director of the Florida State University Survey Foundry (FSUSF), to conduct the CSS. Dr. Jia provided the Council with quarterly reports and a written annual report for 2020-2021. The Council also played an essential role in completing the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) facilitated by San Diego State University.

The Council and the Blind Services Foundation of Florida provided feedback to the FDBS via quarterly and special meetings. The FDBS values our stakeholders' time and their review and evaluation of FDBS services/projects. The Council offered the following recommendations:

- **Work on increasing the options for apprenticeship programs and job readiness programs.**
  Response: The plan addresses this in Section (o) and states, "FDBS plans to increase participation in apprenticeships by working with businesses/employers to encourage sponsorship of registered apprenticeship programs and marketing programs to youth/adults seeking vocational training experiences to increase on-the-job training opportunities. A credentialed apprenticeship program is under development. The agency-sponsored apprenticeship will lead to an industry certification for a Web Accessibility Specialist."
- **Utilize the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) and other methods to help more clients become employed.**
  Response: FDBS' strategic plan reflects activities designed to utilize technologies, such as the TAP. FDBS is also committed to identifying new employers for career opportunities. The FDBS Statewide Business Consultant and Employment Placement Specialists are agency leads for driving this measure.
- **Identify issues with consequences for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to ensure they do not affect their ability to serve clients.**
  Response: The plan addresses this in Section (o) and states, "FDBS strengthened its monitoring process by revising onsite auditing procedures/protocols that reflect the new contract requirements. Contract managers receive monthly reports from CRPs that demonstrate program success and progress toward meeting deliverables."
- **Identify ways to continue to advertise and make JAWS Software available to FDBS clients.**
  Response: The plan addresses this in Section (o) and states, "FDBS finalized a license agreement with Vispero to provide access to assistive technology (AT) in 2019. This agreement makes FDBS the first in the nation to provide statewide access to AT. The license allows FDBS to supply clients and workforce partners with JAWS, ZoomText, and Fusion."
- **Identify how FDBS can adequately screen clients to ensure they are seeking legitimate vocational outcomes so that resources are adequately utilized.**
  Response: Upon referral to FDBS for services, applicants complete an intake screening to determine **eligibility** for VR services. Once the counselor verifies eligibility, applicants move to clients. Clients undergo vocational evaluations to determine suitability for employment. If the client is determined ineligible for VR/employment program, they are referred to an appropriate program (example; IL/OB).
- **Work with LWDBs to serve as meaningful partners by ensuring they have accessible technologies to support clients and FDBS has a membership on each of the local boards.**
  Response: FDBS continues to build relationships with local workforce partners. As part of each of our Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), we plan for office space and technology that can be provided by FDBS. FDBS also agrees and is encouraging local membership on the workforce boards.

(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

FDBS is not requesting a Waiver of Statewideness for this plan.

(c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System

FDBS has agreements with the following agencies and other entities that do not conduct activities under the workforce system.

- **Agencies for Persons with Disabilities (APD**) – FDBS collaborates with APD to coordinate services for consumers with visual impairments and other developmental disabilities.
- **Department of Children and Families (DCF)** – DCF is a required partner under the Employment First Act.
- **Florida Independent Living Council (FILC)** – FILC is a federal and state-mandated council that collaborates with FDBS on planning and evaluating independent living services, preparing annual reports and conducting public forums.
- **Florida Rehabilitation Association (FRA), State Chapter of National Organization** – FRA works to advance rehabilitation of all persons with disabilities.
- **Vispero** – An assistive technology provider for blind and visually impaired consumers.

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) provides free access to information, referral services, educational programs and publications on extensive topics related to disability rights, laws/policies and funding opportunities for assistive technology.

FDBS does not collaborate with the Department of Agriculture on a routine basis. Staff are aware of the Rural Development Program and can provide this resource to clients who are interested in homeownership.

FDBS has contracts with 20 CRPs and values the services they provide to our clients. FDBS' CRPs directly provide and facilitate vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with blindness and low vision to enable clients to maximize their opportunities for employment and career advancement. The CRPs collectively have 14 contracts for pre-employment transition and transition services, 16 contracts for vocational rehabilitation, and 1 contract for supported employment. The CRPs provide education; independent life skills; job training; and job development, retention, and placement services to clients who participate in vocational rehabilitation programs.

To increase accountability, ensure quality services, and drive outcomes, FDBS incorporated common performance measures (or a variant thereof) prescribed by WIOA to determine the effectiveness of CRP performance. The CRPs are responsible for tracking and reporting the number of consumers who obtain employment as a result of receiving their services as well as those still employed in the second and fourth quarters. The contractor receives additional payment for clients who remain employed beyond the fourth quarter. The contractor provides a Performance Measure Proposal to FDBS on a semi-annual basis. The proposal must clearly define a minimum of five (5) performance measures and the methods used to track performance. FDBS withholds payments until the contractor submits the Performance Measure Proposal and required reports.

The Division has a state use contracting agreement with RESPECT to provide cleaning services at the Residential Rehabilitation Center.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

The pandemic caused extensive workforce reductions in Florida's important industry sectors and triggered a digital shift with new online and hybrid training programs emerging within various industries as part of efforts to fill the workforce gap. As students and youth gain invaluable exposure to the jobs of the future while in high school, they will enter college campuses with a clearer vision of their desired career pathways.

Executive Order 19-31 outlines actions designed to make Florida number one in the nation in workforce education by 2030, which includes ensuring students are prepared for the jobs of the future. House Bill 1507, the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act of 2021, creates a system-wide approach to improve equity and access to workforce training and education for all Floridians. It is a bold step to modernize the pathway for students into the future of work while providing a new framework for greater collaboration between high schools, community colleges, workforce agencies and industries. FDBS aligned its mission and priorities with both the Executive Order and HB 1507 in view of a more integrated and efficient workforce system.

Pathway projects from the classroom to workplace include the following elements:

- Increase opportunities for all Floridians to reskill or upskill through vendors, public postsecondary institutions and the Florida Ready to Work program with a focus on employability skills;
- Continue to track measurable skills gains of postsecondary credential attainment within the Aware (accessible web-based activity and reporting environment) case management system;
- Continue to track credential attainment measures for students with disabilities within the Aware case management system;
- Increase collaboration and implementation of one seamless referral intake form for the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), Department of Education (DOE), and DCF to create a "no wrong door" entry strategy where Floridians have access to services from multiple workforce partners via one platform;
- Continue to serve the underserved populations to improve the economic mobility for Floridians; and
- Increase the collaboration with FDBS of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to ensure engagement of program review processes and provide transparent new workforce programs to Floridians.

There is an interagency cooperative agreement between the Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Division of Public Schools (DPS), FDBS, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to assist students with disabilities in successfully transitioning to postsecondary training programs, education, and competitive integrated employment. The FDBS and the DVR offer Pre-ETS to prepare students with disabilities ages 14-21 for success in 21st century careers. The LEAs collaborate for transition services under IDEA that meet the required Pre-ETS. Students who only need Pre-ETS may receive these services from DVR or FDBS without making an application for other partner services. Pre-ETS are also available to students with disabilities who apply for partner services.

Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, 14(c), states businesses referred to as "employers" are prohibited from employing individuals with disabilities 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage. Under the State Educational Agreement (SEA), educational agencies will not contract with entities that provide work experiences at or under subminimum wage. The LEAs must provide documentation to the vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency of the provision of transition services under the Individuals with Education Act

(IDEA) or Pre-ETS for students who may be seeking subminimum wage employment.

The FDBS works jointly with FDBS of Career and Adult Education (DCAE) to increase apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship participation for individuals who are blind or visually impaired under the Perkins grant. Under WIOA, FDBS staff began to strengthen the focus on career pathways for clients. This includes assisting clients with earning credentials and certifications in fields consistent with labor market demands.

The Last Mile College Completion Program is for students who left college within 12 or fewer credit hours of obtaining a degree. This program creates greater collaboration between the FDBS and the Florida College System. Early review of the data indicates there are consumers who may benefit from this program. The FDBS tracks educational goals via the Aware case management system. There are 488 students currently enrolled in college supported by FDBS.

The FDBS pays post-secondary tuition rates for qualifying consumers. Counselors work with staff from each college when determining how much of the total cost for tuition the Division will sponsor. This ensures there is no duplication of funding. Counselors assist students in navigating the college system, including receiving support through the Office of Student Disability Services.

High school students who participate in work-based learning experiences and career and technical education can earn credits toward graduation requirements. FDBS will continue to collaborate with DCAE and students with visual impairments to encourage dual enrollment and increase student involvement in this program.

To implement the Florida statutes and federal laws/regulations, the FDBS and the DPS agree to coordinate activities in serving students who are blind and visually impaired through the following:

- The development of the Florida State Plan under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The FDBS collaborates with the Bureau of Exceptional Student Education (BESE), the DVR, and the Florida School for Deaf and Blind to ensure the students with multiple disabilities including blindness have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). If the student has a disability that is not eligible for special education through IDEA, a 504 plan might be appropriate.
- The preparation and implementation of guidelines, policies, rules, and regulations, which affect the interests of students with visual impairments through joint planning committees and publications, as appropriate. FDBS participates in joint workgroup committees with BESE to work on increasing staff knowledge of evidence-based practices to support the engagement of students during the transition planning process.
- The development of new programs or the initiation of new services for students with visual impairments. As a part of FDBS's joint workgroup, the committee will develop a statewide family mentoring program that fully involves families in transition planning efforts. FDBS works with BESE to increase collaborative program planning/development at the local level and to increase the provision of adult advocates for students at risk of dropping out.
- Interchange of information on the monitoring and evaluation of special programs for students with visual impairments. FDBS collaborates with all partners to align policies/procedures across agencies, reduce duplication of services within relevant systems (e.g., mental health, vocational rehabilitation), and develop an integrated data system.
- Promotion and provision of training for teachers and FDBS staff who work with students who are blind and visually impaired. The Division collaborates with BESE to meet its goal of increasing staff

knowledge of how to align post-secondary goals with the pathway to graduation and a career. The agencies use activities outlined in the interagency agreement to increase opportunities for cross-agency professional development.

- The dissemination of information and other activities to increase public awareness of visual disabilities and services available to students with visual impairments. FDBS provides information on transition services to students and their families in various languages. An increase in responses to the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Parent Survey will serve as one method to determine if marketing efforts are successful.

Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities

Counselors update the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for vocational rehabilitation consumers annually as needed, prior to graduation or leaving school for a seamless transition to a student's desired postsecondary outcome. The counselor determines eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, develops an approved IPE, and sponsors the delivery of necessary transition services to assist the student with planning, preparing for, and achieving competitive integrated employment. The development of the IPE must occur within 90 days.

The average time of DBS exceeds the federal 90-day standard with an average time between application submission and eligibility determination for VR is approximately 31 days. The average time between eligibility determination and IPE development is approximately 14 days.

Information on Formal Interagency Agreements with Respect To: Technical Assistance and Consultation

The Divisions of Blind Services and Vocational Rehabilitation will assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including Pre-ETS. The agencies provide technical assistance through various means, such as conference calls, video conferences, and in-person training opportunities. Each agency shall share the responsibilities of providing training and technical assistance as requested to students, family members, advocates, educators, counselors, service providers, other state agency staff, and the public regarding policies and procedures related to transition services, including Pre-ETS. The partners work together to build capacity within local education agencies (LEAs) and vendors to provide quality transition services throughout Florida by providing training, technical assistance, on-site reviews, and consultation. When possible, the partners will conduct joint staff trainings or cross-training of staff to ensure operational activities continue to meet the needs of all partners involved.

Transition Planning by FDBS and Educational Agency Representatives for Development and Completion of the Individual Educational Plan

Counselors attend meetings for the development of an IEP when invited, with appropriate consent and as resources allow. In collaboration with LEAs, the FDBS provides or arranges the provision of Pre-ETS to all students with disabilities who may need these services. Counselors develop an IPE – in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 – as early as possible during the transition planning process; however, no later than exit from the school setting.

The FDBS enhanced the Aware case management system to collect and track transition data required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The enhancements enable FDBS to conduct differential analysis and tracking to effectively evaluate agency performance and identify how to improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Financial Responsibilities of Each Agency
The parties of the interagency agreement commit to aligning or designing programs that are complementary, which will assist with the provision of Pre-ETS and other transition services to students with disabilities – including youth with the most significant disabilities – to assist them in achieving competitive integrated employment. Each partner has a financial responsibility for delivering services identified under the respective student plans (e.g., the IPE, IEP, 504). The FDBS sets aside 15% of the yearly federal allotment for client services to fund Pre-ETS for students with disabilities. The FDBS, DVR, and DPS use the following criteria for determining financial and programmatic responsibilities:

- **Purpose of the service** – Discuss at the state level whether the purpose of the service is related to an employment outcome or education attainment, or if it is considered a special education or related service.
- **Customary services** – Is the service one that the school customarily provides under IDEA part B?
- **Eligibility for services** – Is the student with a disability eligible for transition services under IDEA?

Procedures for Outreach to Students with Disabilities (SWDs) Who Need Transition Services
The FDBS employs a Program Consultant as the central point of contact for the School to Work Transition Program. The consultant serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Transition counselors serve as representatives who work with public high schools statewide and charter schools requesting assistance. Transition counselors provide and coordinate outreach and vocational rehabilitation services to students, school officials, parents, and others involved in transition services.

In addition, FDBS provides outreach to students with disabilities under the following activities:

- Coordinating with LEAs, state and community partners, CareerSource Florida, and postsecondary institutions to disseminate information on available services and resources for students with disabilities;
- Presenting information about services and programs at education conferences and other transition-focused training sessions;
- Providing printed materials to schools to share with students, family members and other interested parties; and
- Participating on Interagency Councils.

(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

FDBS follows the guidelines outlined in Section 413.208, Florida Statutes, which creates a format by which agencies make agreements across all service deliverables (Adult Blind, Blind Babies, Children Programs, Older Blind, & VR-TS). FDBS provides CRPs with a copy of the most current statute annually. The CRPs agree to register with DBS. To qualify for registration, CRPs must maintain an internal system of quality assurance, have existing functional systems in place, and submit to a due-diligence inquiry as to its fitness to undertake service responsibilities. Cooperative agreements are specific to the needs of clients and take into account the unique projects outlined in a service area. CRPs base the extent of services they provide, in part, on the types of services available through a specific program, the needs of the community, and the resources available within FDBS.

FDBS requires CRPs to hire certified staff to work with individuals who are blind or visually impaired. CRPs providing orientation and mobility direct client services must have, at minimum, one full-time qualified or currently certified orientation and mobility instructor satisfied by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP), National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC), or endorsed by a qualified State Education Board. CRPs providing non-orientation and mobility, vision-related direct client services must have a minimum of one full-time staff member that meets one of the following requirements:

- Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS);
- Certified Visual Rehabilitation Therapist (CVRT);
- Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI); and/or
- Low Vision Therapist (LVT).

(f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

The FDBS has a contractual agreement with the Conklin Davis Center for the Blind (Conklin) to identify and provide services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth. Conklin provides comprehensive residential and community-based supported employment services. Services include individualized training for blind and severely visually impaired persons with one or more secondary disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities. Conklin focuses on training in areas aimed to assist participants in obtaining employment in competitive, integrated settings and provides supportive employment services to maintain employment. Services under this contractual agreement also include on-site community-based services. These services consist of training concentrated on activities associated with daily living, money management, self-advocacy, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, and communication skills.

Local CRPs also provide supported employment services as part of their FDBS vocational rehabilitation contract.

Supported employment services entail job readiness training, job coaching, job development, on-the-job skills training and job placement. Additionally, services may include follow-up services with employers; individual advocacy, such as facilitating positive relationships with co-workers and supervisors; assisting with transportation; discrete post-employment services, such as job station redesign; and repair/maintenance of assistive technology.

FDBS entered into an interagency cooperative agreement with other state agencies and organizations to implement Employment First – a national effort to ensure employers offer individuals with disabilities employment on a preferred basis. Employment First is consistent with the FDBS belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can achieve meaningful employment when provided with appropriate supports. The following table lists the names of all parties of this agreement.

Agencies for Persons with Disabilities	CareerSource Florida
Bureau of Exceptional Education & Student Services	Department of Children and Families
Division of Blind Services	Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
Department of Economic Opportunity	The Arc of Florida

(g) Coordination with Employers

Under the interagency cooperative agreement referenced above, the FDBS' coordination with employers is part of a range of activities that include developing a long-term communications plan to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The FDBS achieves this by motivating employers to hire; promoting a consistent message of awareness among employers about the value individuals with disabilities bring to the workforce; informing employers about the resources available to assist with their hiring needs; and providing businesses with a diverse, talented labor pool of motivated and qualified candidates.

As part of a collaborative effort with the statewide workforce systems, the FDBS director serves on the statewide workforce board and district administrators collaborate with their LWDBs during visits to workforce centers and other venues. FDBS utilizes the following to increase partnerships with the statewide workforce investment system and employers in the state of Florida:

- Work with businesses/employers to encourage sponsorship of registered apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship programs allow companies to build the skilled, diverse workforces that are essential to success. Employment Placement Specialists (EPS) offer businesses support by matching qualified candidates to apprenticeship and workforce opportunities that open doors to career opportunities for people from a variety of backgrounds who have a wide range of skills.
- Increase utilization of online job systems/portals to expose employers to consumers who are ready for employment. The Statewide Business Consultant (SBC) shares the TAP report monthly. The SBC provides one-on-one training for new counselors, EPS, and supervisors. FDBS will consider hosting TAP job developing events monthly to sign up and publish resumes of consumers who are seeking employment.
- Develop and strengthen employer relationships by providing employer training, support, education, and resources. The EPS and SBC provide training to employers during partnership development. This training involves blind and visually impaired etiquette training, education on the Americans with Disabilities Act for hiring managers, reasonable job accommodations, assistive technology assistance, resources on DBS work experience/OJT, and tax credits. EPS also works with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities.
- Develop mechanisms to maximize job placement effectiveness among EPS and contracted service providers.
- The U.S. Department of Labor's 7% Solution challenges federal contractors to strive to have 7% of their labor force be comprised of people with disabilities. The FDBS aims to target federal contractors that post thousands of jobs in the TAP trying to reach the 7% target goal to maximize opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
- Create training methods to better integrate individuals with disabilities into the workforce. Counselors, EPS, and supervisors participate in mandatory Employment Outcomes Professional (EOP) training, which includes a review of job development techniques, marketing strategies, and the sales process plan.
- Collaborate efforts between multiple agencies and organizations to achieve the intent of the Employment First Act. The SBC attends the Employment First Collaborations Team quarterly meetings with eight other agencies. This team uses collaborative discussions on partner response to Covid-19 and agency updates to draft an annual accomplishment report. The SBC provided updates

to the communication plan in collaboration with five partner agencies. The EPS and SBC participated in the Employment First toolkit training, which provides a guide/resource for all employment service professionals. The toolkit meets the Association of People Supporting Employment (APSE) competencies and reflects evidence-based practices in employment training.

- Promote service innovation. The EPS and SBC have in-person meetings with employers to discuss FDBS's services. The services are free to businesses and include significant support to blind and visually impaired employees. Marketing strategies entail targeted outreach to medical providers, schools, non-profit/state agencies, Chamber of Commerce events, and CareerSource centers.
- Identify baseline employment outcome data for individuals with disabilities and set targets for improvement. FDBS strives to increase the utilization of online job portals by 10% over the next three years. The SBC focuses efforts on creating partnerships with major stakeholders and developing/strengthening employer relationships to increase employment outcomes. The goal is to increase employment outcomes by 10%; this includes work-based learning experiences and apprenticeship participation.

Through coordination with employers and the workforce system, the Division utilizes these strategies to foster equal access for clients, generate program awareness, strengthen infrastructure, and increase the number of employers who provide opportunities for work-based learning experiences and hire youth with disabilities.

(h) Interagency Cooperation

FDBS collaborates with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), DCF, and other state agencies to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment. Each agency is responsible for completing activities under the cooperative agreement. Activities are coordinated at three levels: Partner (Coalition) Level – advise and make recommendations that inform the work of the state level; State Level – identify barriers that hinder individuals with disabilities from obtaining employment and determine potential solutions; and Local Level – seek training solutions and best practices to close program gaps and recommend improvements. The partners meet at least twice a year with representatives from each partner agency.

The APD is responsible for providing unique services and programs to individuals with cognitive disabilities via the State Medicaid Plan under Title XIX of Social Security. They support these individuals and their families with living, learning, and working in the community. FDBS collaborates with APD on reciprocal referrals for individuals who are blind/visually impaired and have cognitive disabilities. APD case managers work with VR counselors during IEP meetings to ensure there is no duplication of services for students who are dual clients of both agencies.

DCF oversees substance abuse and mental health programs/providers in the state. FDBS collaborates with DCF to outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner to improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. DCF provides training on service integration for persons battling substance abuse and/or mental health issues.

FDBS works in conjunction with the FRCB to review, analyze and advise the Division on its performance of responsibilities under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Blind Services Foundation of Florida is also a key partner with FDBS. The Foundation's purpose is to serve as a Direct Support Organization to FDBS and individuals with visual impairments living in Florida. The Foundation receives proceeds from the Biker's Care license tags and uses funds to support programs within FDBS, conduct activities, and initiate developmental projects for the benefit of Floridians who are blind or visually impaired.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development
FDBS recognizes the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials as a standard for counselors. Counselors who wish to obtain certification or acquire Continuing Education Units (CEUs)(for standing CRC holders) receive FDBS's support to the highest extent. The FDBS encourages credential attainment by providing a salary increase to those who have or achieve certification as rehabilitation counselors.

Personnel must meet the academic requirements described in the "Personnel Standards" section of this document. Florida utilizes the People First human resource system to collect, track and maintain personnel information related to hiring and staff records. The Human Resources (HR) section extracts data from People First indicating staff vacancies and those enrolled in the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP). Each employee in the DROP system must terminate on a specific date; this enables FDBS to predict, to the extent possible, when some vacancies will occur. The HR section notifies supervisors of employees who are in the DROP program 12 months prior to their term/retirement date.

The following table identifies the number of positions within FDBS during SFY 2020-2021. Positions, such as district administrators, assistant district administrators, VR counselors, employment placement specialists, and program administrators contribute to the coordination of vocational rehabilitation services and consist of those carrying a caseload. Additionally, a number of employees at the rehabilitation center conduct assessments and provide orientation and mobility training, counseling/guidance and job placement under the VR umbrella. Currently, these totals/positions are sufficient to meet the needs of FDBS to provide vocational rehabilitation services for the blind. Considering factors such as the retirement of staff who are in the DROP system, staff resignations (turnovers), and the number of clients who may require vocational rehabilitation services, the FDBS projects a slight change to the number of staff needed to administer program services in five years. This change is predominately in the number of counselors required to serve clients as this number increases. The main goal is to continue to provide efficient and quality services, which is only achievable when counselors have time to dedicate to each client's unique circumstances. If the trend in the number of clients served continues on its current trajectory, FDBS will need one or two additional counselor positions.

Figure 10.01
Personnel Employed by FDBS

Bureau	Positions
Administrative Office	17
Fiscal	8
nformation Technology	6
Operations and Compliance	12
Business Enterprise	16
Braille and Talking Book Library	26
Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired	46
Client Services	159
Total	**290**

FDBS obtains data to determine the counselor-to-client ratio from Aware case management system. FDBS served 5,129 individuals in the VR Program in SFY 2020-2021, which represents an increase of 139 from the previous year. The FDBS served 4,990 individuals in SFY 2019-2020. The average ratio of clients per counselor is 56 to 1 in the VR Program. A comparison of the four years prior indicates a statistically insignificant change in the ratio of clients served per counselor (See Figure 10.02). There are occasions when these ratios fluctuate based on counselor vacancies within each district. There were 12 counselor vacancies throughout eight districts during the drafting of this report.

Figure 10.02
FDBS Counselor to Client Ratio

State Fiscal Year	Total Cases	Ratio (person served/counselor)
2021	2,928	56
2020	2,769	44
2019	2,884	48
2018	2,878	45
2017	3,006	48

Figure 10.03
Personnel Serving FDBS Vocational Rehabilitation Clients: Vacancy Information

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies Over 5 Years
District Administrator	10	2	2
Assistant District Administrators	13	2	4
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	53	12	25

There are 11 CRC credentialed members within FDBS. Each of the following four state universities offers a graduate counseling degree that fulfills the educational requirements for CRC credentials with a minimum of other required classes.

- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida International University
- University of North Florida
- University of South Florida

Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education

The following table illustrates information from Florida institutions of higher education that prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals categorized by the name of the institution and type of program for 2020 and 2021. FDBS is unable to obtain this information for all of the universities listed.

Institution, Program Type and Degree	Number of Students Enrolled	VR/RSA Sponsored Employees	VR/RSA Sponsored Graduates	Previous Year Graduates
Florida Atlantic University Graduate-level Rehabilitation Training Program; MEd and PhD	MEd- 44 PhD- 1	MEd- 4 PhD- 0	MEd- 26 PhD- 0	MEd- 42 PhD- 1
Florida International University Rehabilitation Counseling Program; MS in Counselor Education	MS- 15	MS- 3	MS- 3	MS- 5

FDBS acknowledges that there are many graduate-level counseling-related majors at public state universities that qualify graduates for certification as rehabilitation counselors.

In 2019, FDBS began an initiative for senior rehabilitation specialists, and other FDBS team members to become Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC). Such certification is instrumental for increasing our team's knowledge of social security benefits and the effects employment has on such benefits. There is a competitive selection process for participation in these trainings and applicants must successfully complete an introductory course. The program selected five out of 15 counselors who applied for the training and two successfully completed the program.

All Florida state employees may take up to six credit hours per semester using the Florida Tuition Waiver Program. FDBS expects employees who do not meet CSPD requirements to take advantage of the state's tuition waiver program or participate in federal grant/stipend programs. When necessary, the FDBS may pay for tuition, e.g., when a state university is not within driving distance, when a staff member is unable to use the tuition waiver for any required courses, etc.

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Qualified Personnel

FDBS uses People First for recruiting qualified personnel. Managers hire selected candidates based on minimum qualifications with the expectation that candidates meet all standards within a specified period – usually one year. FDBS focuses on recruiting persons with disabilities and referring employment opportunities to disability organizations. However, FDBS remains an equal opportunity employer and hires persons with and without disabilities at all levels of employment.

All managers within FDBS struggle with filling vacancies in their areas, a nationally recognized trend with the COVID-19 pandemic owning most of the blame. Changes in the way agencies do business as a response to the pandemic also play a crucial role. Many candidates seeking to work from home pursue employment based on this as a benefit to employment. The FDBS generally does not allow teleworking one hundred percent of the time but allows staff to telework between one to three days. Salaries have a significant impact on recruitment and retention. To address this barrier, the FDBS director championed higher wages for the Human Services Program Consultant (i.e., VR Counselors) and Rehabilitation Specialists (i.e., Employment Placement Specialists) based on education and tenure in 2018. When funding permits, the FDBS awards a $2,000 pay additive to the base salary of Human Services Program Consultants who become CRC credentialed during employment. If a Human Services Program Consultant is a CRC at the time of hire, the beginning salary is set at $2,000 above the base salary. The same applies to Assistant District Administrators and District Administrators having or attaining a credential as a CRC. Legislation passed in 2021 requiring the state to increase the minimum wage to $15 an hour. FDBS continues to advocate for additional funding for team members. The Florida legislature increased all base employee salaries to at least $13 per hour in the 2021 regular session.

FDBS works with state universities that provide master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling. Activities include attending board meetings and presenting to college classes upon request to share pertinent information related to FDBS and recruitment efforts. FDBS has strategic partnerships with St. Petersburg College, University of South Florida, Stetson University, College of Central Florida, and Daytona State College. Clients with master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling are encouraged to apply for vacant positions. The Florida State University's (FSU) Visual Disabilities Program began offering coursework designed to prepare general and special educators, who are or would like to be working with students in Florida who have visual impairments. FSU offers this certificate program in two (2) segments through online content delivery and field experiences that will include hands-on practice working with students who have visual impairments. FDBS presents programs and current projects to FSU students, creating collaboration and an opportunity for internships with FDBS, LEAs, and our service providers.

Personnel Standards

Due to difficulty in hiring individuals who meet current CRC certification standards, FDBS routinely hires those who meet and/or exceed the minimum qualifications. The following table illustrates the required qualifications for vocational rehabilitation staff by position title.

Figure 10.04
FDBS Personnel Standards by Position State Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Position Title	Minimum Qualifications
Word Processor	One year operating word processing equipment; or two years of secretarial or clerical work; or completion of 720 classroom hours of vocational/technical training in word processing; or possession of a Certified Professional Secretary Certificate; or college education; or vocational/technical training in secretarial science or office/business studies; or high school diploma/GED + one year of secretarial or clerical experience
Senior Word Processor	Two years' operating word processing equipment; or three years of secretarial or clerical work; or possession of a Certified Professional Secretary Certificate; or completion of 720 classroom hours of vocational/technical training in word processing + one year operating word processing equipment; or college education + 1-2 years secretarial or clerical experience; or college education + one year operating word processing equipment; or vocational/technical training in secretarial science or office/business studies at 720 hours rate + 1-2 years secretarial or clerical experience; or vocational/technical training in secretarial science or office/business studies at 720 hours rate + one year operating word processing equipment; or high school diploma/GED + two years secretarial or clerical experience
Staff Assistant	Three years secretarial or clerical experience; or college education + 0-2 years secretarial or clerical experience; or vocational/technical training in secretarial science or office/business studies + 0-2 years secretarial or clerical experience; or high school diploma/GED + two years secretarial or clerical experience
Rehabilitation Technician	Bachelor's degree or high school diploma/GED + four years of professional or nonprofessional experience in health, social, economic, or rehabilitation programs
Rehabilitation Specialist (Employment Placement Specialist)	Master's degree + 2 years of professional experience in health, social, economic, or rehabilitation programs; or bachelor's degree + three years of professional experience in health, social, economic, or rehabilitation programs; or seven years of professional or nonprofessional experience in health, social, economic, or rehabilitation programs
Human Services Program Consultant (VR Counselor)	Master's degree + three years of professional experience in social, economic, health, or rehabilitation programs; or Bachelor's degree + four years of professional experience in social, economic, health, or rehabilitation programs; or eight years of professional or nonprofessional experience in social, economic, health, or rehabilitation programs
Assistant District Administrator and District Administrator	Requirements of the VR counselors + one or more years of supervisory experience

FDBS provides training for ongoing CEUs, using the vocational rehabilitation grant funding. Division Policy 12.12, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development addresses the reimbursement standards described below as required by federal regulations. All personnel are eligible for reimbursement of the following expenses:

- **Tuition** – All individuals seeking further education will be required to use the Department of Education Tuition Waiver, if available. Employees must obtain prior approval of payment from the Bureau Chief in instances where a course requires repeating;
- **Textbooks and Course Materials** – These expenses include textbooks and other materials required for course enrollment (paper, notebooks, etc., are not items FDBS pays for); and
- **Additional Training** – FDBS will sponsor additional training on job-related areas recommended/required by leadership. Staff may participate in these trainings during work hours.

FDBS does not sponsor graduate record examinations and university application fees. FDBS allows the completion of class assignments incorporated into required work duties (e.g., practicum activities, internships) during working hours. It is unallowable to complete other homework assignments (e.g., reading, writing, and research) during regular work hours.

FDBS tracks the current educational status of personnel as well as their progress in complying with the CSPD requirements. FDBS has 15 personnel with a CRC designation and two (2) certified orientation and mobility instructors as of SFY 2021. The following table indicates the CRC eligibility status of staff by position.

Figure 10.05
FDBS Personnel with Recognized Credentials
SFY 2021

CRC	COMS	CWIC	CVRT	CVE
11	3	4	2	1 - In Progress

Staff Development

FDBS monitors personnel development needs on an annual basis. The VR basic support grant funds all training. FDBS based its core training programs on the areas emphasized in the federal regulations: rehabilitation technology, career guidance and counseling, job development, placement, and assessment. Staff members receive additional training as needed to ensure a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force. FDBS collaborates with the CareerSource Florida Network's career centers and shares information about its services and the referral process with disability navigators at the CareerSource Florida Network's career centers. FDBS seeks opportunities to coordinate training FAAST by referring clients to FAAST for assistive technology. The FAAST demonstrates, trains, and temporarily loans equipment for clients to use.

The assessment of training needs is an ongoing process consisting of ensuring compliance with federal and state mandates and examining individual personnel training requirements related to current job performance, future job requirements, and promotional or career advancement needs. Training is an essential component of the VR program and turnover often complicates this process. FDBS plans to incorporate a new Learning Management System (LMS) into its training process. The chosen LMS must have an array of courses designed for vocational rehabilitation to enhance understanding of the

rehabilitation process. FDBS selected several staff members serving in positions with varying roles and responsibilities to complete online courses offered via the Yes LMS, Florida TRAIN, and Udemy Business. Based on their feedback, FDBS will determine which system best fits its needs as it relates to the VR program. Analysis of training needs compiled from performance reviews, the strategic plan, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, training evaluations and surveys indicated continual training is necessary in the following areas:

- Expanding staff knowledge of serving individuals with dual disabilities (where individuals have a primary disability of blindness and a dual disability unrelated to vision);
- Overcoming employment barriers for visually impaired consumers with a criminal history;
- Providing rehabilitation counseling for individuals with visual impairment and substance abuse issues and/or psychiatric disorders; and
- Information on benefits counseling and the Ticket to Work Program.

VR counselors also benefit from training in supported employment, identifying appropriate candidates, working through the rehabilitation process with these individuals, and recording accurate information for federal reports. Vocational rehabilitation staff receives annual training on various aspects of the VR program, including career counseling and assessment. The annual training in April 2021 focused on topics specific to fiscal management, business enterprise program, vocational evaluations, case management/documentation, dual cases, social security reimbursement/Ticket to Work, Pre-ETS/Transition, policies and procedures, SSI/SSDI, and customized employment.

Given that job placement and development are pivotal elements to client success, FDBS requires all rehabilitation specialists, senior rehabilitation specialists, and assistant district administrators to participate in three levels of training – assessment, job development, and placement as part of the Employment Outcomes Professional II Training Manual developed by DTG-EMP, Inc.

Training during the assessment level entails eligibility determination, understanding low vision reports and eye diseases terminology, and vocational assessment. The assessment level also includes training on developing an IPE. For the job development level, training is concentrated on the process of developing jobs, which includes generation of leads, selection for time management purposes, holding face-to-face meetings with employers to identify needs, and closing the deal (actual placement). This level of training incorporates a tool for self-assessment as job developers. The job placement level focuses on training employees to identify the essential elements needed to obtain/maintain a job including motivation, abilities, access to employers, and credibility. At this level, employees learn intervention tools and marketing strategies to manage their caseloads as job developers.

FDBS utilizes the rehabilitation technology training conducted by the Rehabilitation Center (RC) for all professional and paraprofessional personnel. This training includes a weeklong introduction to rehabilitation technology for blind and visually impaired individuals and incorporates the use of rehabilitation technology in job development activities. The RC provides this training annually to update existing personnel on new technology issues.

Dissemination of Knowledge from Research and other Resources
FDBS disseminates knowledge from research and other resources via trainings, conference calls, emails, memos, policies/procedures, and technical assistance. Employees have internet access and receive information on relevant and informative websites. Each district office is required to provide quarterly in-service trainings for employees on topics such as blindness rehabilitation, informed choice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and social security work incentives. When funding is available, leadership encourages employees to attend an array of conferences in the field of rehabilitation or blindness.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs
FDBS employs individuals who communicate in the native languages of applicants and eligible individuals. District offices in areas highly populated with non-English speaking individuals strive to hire personnel who speak the native languages of individuals in the community. FDBS purchases language interpreter services (including sign language) when necessary to communicate with an applicant or eligible individual. Documents such as an application for services, Client Rights, Guidelines for Developing an Individualized Plan for Employment, and informational brochures are available in appropriate formats (e.g., large print, Braille, Spanish).

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
FDBS has a cooperative agreement with the Florida Department of Education's Division of Public Schools to coordinate activities for students who are blind and visually impaired. These activities include drafting and implementing guidelines, policies, rules, and regulations that affect the interests of students with visual impairments through joint planning committees and publications, as appropriate. The FDBS provides training for teachers and personnel who work with students who are blind and visually impaired. Both divisions share information and coordinate activities to increase public awareness of visual disabilities and services available to students with visual impairments.

(j) Statewide Assessment

FDBS commissioned a three-year CSNA to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with visual disabilities. Dr. Chaz Compton, project director of San Diego State University Interwork Institute (SDSU), led the completion of the CSNA in 2019. The CSNA addresses requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, that states each state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) must conduct a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of its residents. These needs are for supported employment services, minorities, and other unserved/underserved populations, persons served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system, and the need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs. Dr. Compton conducted interviews with FDBS staff, community partners, consumers and businesses – including 49 individual interviews and 288 as part of a focus group. The interviews took place July through September 2018 in each district office. The CSNA is broken down into several categories.

- **Section I** – Overall agency performance
- **Section II** – Needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment
- **Section III** – Needs of individuals with blindness or visual impairments from different ethnic groups, including needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program
- **Section IV** – Needs of youth and students with blindness or visual impairments in transition, including Pre-ETS
- **Section V** – Needs of individuals with blindness or visual impairments served through other components of the statewide Workforce Development System
- **Section VI** – Need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs in Florida
- **Section VII** – Needs of businesses

The CSNA utilizes quantitative data for FFY 2015 through 2017 and qualitative data from FFY 2015 through September 2018. The following details the specific methods used for gathering the data for this assessment. The project team at SDSU reviewed a variety of existing data sources to identify and describe demographic data within Florida, including the total possible target population and sub-populations potentially served by FDBS. Dr. Compton used data relevant to the population of individuals with blindness or visual impairments in Florida, ethnicity of individuals, the number of Veterans, income level, educational levels, and other characteristics in this analysis. Contributing resources used in this analysis include the following:

- The 2016 American Community Survey, 1- and 5-Year Estimates;
- U.S. Census Annual Estimates of Resident Population, 2017;
- 2018 Social Security Administration SSI/SSDI Data;
- The Florida Department of Education;
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics;
- Cornell University's disabilitystatistics.org;
- FDBS case service data compiled at the request of the project team; and
- The Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration's RSA-911 data for DBS and data submitted and entered into RSA's Management Information System (MIS).

The CSNA identified the most relevant and pressing needs of FDBS, consumers and community partners. Section O of this plan lists the strategies developed to address these needs.

Overall Agency Performance

- Staff turnover presents a challenge that has an effect on service delivery speed and the continuity of partner relationships. Staff turnover is a common challenge faced by VR agencies across the country.
- FDBS needs to more effectively market services to the community and increase public awareness of the organization.
- Staff training is an essential need.

The Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, including their Need for Supported Employment

- The CSNA cited transportation most frequently as a significant need of consumers; this is especially true in rural areas where options for public transportation are extremely limited. The lack of available public transportation for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with blindness and visual impairments, often presents a significant barrier to employment.
- The CSNA identified assistive technology, independent living skills, and self-advocacy skills training as significant needs for individuals with blindness and visual impairments.
- The fear of the loss of SSA benefits affects the return-to-work behavior of individuals with blindness and visual impairments in Florida; this is also a common concern of SSA beneficiaries across the nation.

The Needs of Individuals with Blindness or Visual Impairments from Different Ethnic Groups, including Needs of Individuals who have been Unserved or Underserved by the VR Program

- For this population, the lack of transportation in rural areas is a significant reason for underserving these areas.
- The FDBS should examine its outreach and service to Hispanic and Asian individuals to ensure that they are aware of services.

The Needs of Youth and Students with Blindness or Visual Impairments in Transition

- All five required pre-employment transition services represent significant rehabilitation needs of students with blindness and visual impairments, with work-based learning experiences being the most significant and important need.
- Youth with blindness and visual impairments need to receive AT early and receive adequate training in its use to maximize the likelihood of their success in post-secondary education.
- Benefits counseling, self-advocacy, and peer mentoring are the needs of youth with blindness and visual impairments.
- Respondents repeatedly cited soft skills training as a need for youth in transition.

The Needs of individuals with Blindness or Visual Impairments Served through other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System

- The CareerSource Florida Network's career centers are not effectively meeting the service needs of individuals with blindness and visual impairments throughout Florida.
- The relationship between the FDBS and the CareerSource Florida Network's career centers remains primarily one of referral.
- There is a need to effectively track and report co-enrollment of FDBS and CareerSource Florida Network consumers.

The Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve CRPs

- Having one primary CRP that provides a full array of VR services in some districts limits choice and affords few options if a change is needed/desired.
- There is an overall need for more providers in rural areas.
- There is a need for more providers that have experience working with individuals that have a secondary disability of mental illness.

The Need for Pre-ETS and Transition Services

- Five required Pre-ETS activities (especially work-based learning experiences)
- Training on the use of assistive technology
- Benefits counseling, self-advocacy, and peer mentoring
- Soft skills training

FDBS works with schools to identify and refer students receiving services under a 504 plan and encourage reciprocity regarding referrals for students with disabilities. FDBS will continue collaborating with the Division of Career and Adult Education to expand opportunities for apprenticeships, internships, and work-based learning experiences for students/youth with disabilities.

(k) Annual Estimates

The FDBS estimates the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the VR program is approximately 5,500; while the number of individuals eligible for services under the Supported Employment (SE) program could reach 500. FDBS based all estimates on trends, spending patterns, and data projections using a review of historical information such as the number of individuals served over the past 5-year average, average caseload size, number of applications, number of IPEs written, and number of consumers who continue to require services from one year to the next. For program year 2021, the FDBS plans to serve up to 5,500 blind and visually impaired clients. FDBS also serves SE clients using basic 110 funds. The FDBS is not under an Order of Selection at this time.

For SFY 2020-2021, FDBS spent $34,286,871.71 for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services – excluding expenditures for the SE. Given the specialized nature of services and the need for specific equipment for individuals who are blind, the cost per person was $9,350.33. The FDBS bases this cost – in part – on the total amount of vocational rehabilitation dollars spent divided by the number of individuals served.

For SFY 2020-2021, FDBS spent $68,845.29 for the provision of SE. The cost for individuals served under SE was $1,207.81 per person. Note FDBS bases this number on the total amount of SE dollars spent divided by the number of persons served under SE. FDBS will continue to use basic 110 funds to provide SE services. Section N outlines more detail on SE services. For FFY 2021-2022, FDBS anticipates spending a total of $35,500,000 of Title I funds to support individuals served in the VR program and $1,500,000 of Title I funds to serve individuals in SE. FDBS based all estimates on trends, spending patterns, and data projections.

(l) State Goals and Priorities

FDBS worked jointly with the FRCB to develop the goals outlined in this plan and the strategic plan. FDBS based its goals and priorities for operating the VR and Supported Employment Programs on analysis of the CSNA, feedback from the FRCB, client satisfaction survey, and the performance accountability measures outlined in section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. By prioritizing the goals described below, FDBS strives to ensure blind and visually impaired Floridians have the tools, support, and opportunities to achieve success. FDBS utilizes various strategies to provide equal access for clients, increase the number of employers hiring clients, generate program awareness, and strengthen infrastructure.

FDBS aligned the goals supporting the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs with the Florida Department of Education's strategic plan goals but has specific objectives for these programs. These goals are 1) Highest Student Achievement; 2) Seamless Articulation and Maximum Access; 3) Skilled Workforce and Economic Development; and 4) Quality Efficient Services.

Goal 1.0 Highest Client Achievement
Objective: Coordinate and secure high-quality training, education, work experiences, and partnerships that create opportunities for blind and visually impaired Floridians to obtain and maintain independence, post-secondary education credentials, and successful employment outcomes.

Goal 2.0 Seamless Articulation and Maximum Access
Objective: Create a comprehensive service delivery system that fosters accessibility and provides positive experiences for blind and visually impaired Floridians enabling them to matriculate from school/training to work. Improve outreach methods to reach more consumers, advocates, providers, employers and other stakeholders.

Goal 3.0 Skilled Workforce and Economic Development
Objective: Assist blind and visually impaired Floridians with obtaining, maintaining and advancing in competitive integrated employment.

Goal 4.0 Quality Efficient Services
Objective: Create an accountable and exemplary division workforce that ensures high-quality services.

(m) Order of Selection

The FDBS is not currently under an Order of Selection.

(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

FDBS does not receive funds for supported employment services. The RSA reassigned supported employment funds to Florida General as requested and authorized by FDBS. However, FDBS provides supported employment services via contracts with CRPs and at the Residential Rehabilitation Center as needed. Supported employment services include job coaching, job placement, and follow-along. Staff may follow clients for up to 24 months after job placement to ensure they are adjusting to the job, completing their duties correctly, coming to work on time, etc.

FDBS uses Title I funds to provide extended services to youth not to exceed four years or until the youth turns 25, whichever occurs first. FDBS leverages funding with other public and private entities as necessary for the provision of extended services and supported employment and works with youth/employers to develop natural supports.

Figure 10.06
Individuals Served by Supported Employment Programs 2019-2021

Community Rehab Provider	Clients Served	Supported Employment Placements	Supported Employment Outcomes
Conklin Davis Center for the Visually Impaired	50	48	16
SE Clients Served via Authorization (Case Services)	57	27	27

(o) State's Strategies

FDBS continually seeks to improve the quality of services to individuals with disabilities. The Quality Assurance Team reviews case forms submitted from the district level on a monthly basis. The team uses data from these forms to identify areas that need improvement and develop methods to address any deficiencies. The team meets with the IT section to determine if the Aware case management system requires changes to meet the needs of revised processes born from data analysis/evaluation. The IT section provides ongoing enhancements to the Aware case management system for a thorough evaluation of performance to identify methods that improve service delivery/program outcomes. The following strategies will assist FDBS in meeting the challenge of expanding/improving services to youth and all populations and enhancing their involvement in the rehabilitation process.

- Coordinate and secure high-quality training, education, work experiences, and partnerships that create opportunities for blind and visually impaired Floridians to obtain and maintain independence, post-secondary education credentials and successful employment outcomes.
- Create a comprehensive service delivery system that fosters accessibility and provides positive experiences for blind and visually impaired Floridians enabling them to matriculate from school/training to work.
- Assist blind and visually impaired Floridians with obtaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive integrated employment.
- Create an accountable and exemplary division workforce that ensures high-quality services.

FDBS finalized a license agreement with Vispero to provide access to assistive technology (AT) in 2019. This agreement makes the FDBS the first in the nation to provide statewide access to AT. The license allows FDBS to supply clients and workforce partners with JAWS, ZoomText, and Fusion. FDBS strengthened its relationship with the Lighthouses to ensure appropriate and client-specific AT is consistent with the needs of all clients. The counselors must reflect the type and need for AT in the Individualized Plan for Employment. FDBS also coordinates training with FAAST by referring clients to FAAST for AT as necessary. The FAAST demonstrates, trains, and temporarily loans equipment for clients to test.

FDBS plans to create comprehensive communication and outreach plans in coordination with existing outreach efforts already operational within the Department of Education. The plan will include educating the public, clients, and current/potential FDBS Business Enterprise Program vendors via media advertisements, social media platforms, public service announcements, conferences and trade shows. As part of both plans, FDBS will develop targeted marketing strategies based on the CSNA data for unserved/underserved populations.

FDBS plans to increase participation in apprenticeships by working with businesses and employers to encourage sponsorship of registered apprenticeship programs, and marketing programs to youth/adults seeking vocational training experiences to increase on-the-job training opportunities. A credentialed apprenticeship program is under development. FDBS's sponsored apprenticeship will lead to an industry certification for a Web Accessibility Specialist. The goal is to select three current clients to participate in this program in the initial implementation.

Another strategy FDBS expects to improve and expand services for students with disabilities is the creation and implementation of an Employment Skills Training Program at the Rehabilitation Center. The Rehabilitation Center provides employment training under the Pre-Employment Program (PEP) and Energize for Employment (EEP) programs. The PEP focuses on preparing clients for the workforce by training clients on interviewing, completing applications, professional presentation, etc. The EEP provides refreshers on skills obtained during the PEP.

FDBS conducts desk and on-site monitoring of CRPs. As part of strategic planning, FDBS will improve upon this by strengthening the monitoring plan, analyzing monthly compliance reports, establishing baselines for risk assessments, and hosting annual roundtables with CRPs. FDBS enhanced its monitoring process by revising onsite auditing procedures/protocols that reflect the new contract requirements. Contract managers receive monthly reports from CRPs that demonstrate program success and progress toward meeting deliverables. The contracts team aims to monitor all service providers (CRPs) annually. With vacancies, staff turnover, and changes in management, this is not always possible. At the beginning of the pandemic, Division and CRP leadership created a COVID-19 Response Team and instituted a monthly meeting of all members.

FDBS uses the Aware case management system to collect and track data on performance accountability measures, including the MSGs. The FDBS automated the process of uploading Aware case management system job-ready client data to the DVR Ability Works Job Portal; thus, enabling the upload into the TAP. Various employers throughout the state use TAP to search for qualified applicants. Employment Placement Specialists and VR counselors assist clients in uploading their resumes to TAP to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the state workforce system. This process should increase the exposure of job-ready clients to potential employers.

The strategic plan defines the strategies/activities designed to affect performance outcomes and help other components of the workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities. The Statewide Business Consultant and Employment Placement Specialist seek businesses/employers daily that have vacancies and need people to fill their positions. FDBS's goal is to collaborate with as many businesses representing various arenas of the workforce to increase employment opportunities for clients.

The vision of House Bill (HB) 1507 aims to create a more unified workforce education and economic development system to improve Floridian's lives. It seeks increased collaboration and cooperation among state business and education communities and aims to address fundamental gaps in access to quality training. FDBS will work with workforce partners to:

- Develop an integrated data system;
- Expand workforce training across sectors; and
- Enhance workforce services by helping job seekers access information about in-demand occupations.

FDBS developed its strategic plan to address barriers, gaps in services, quality assurance issues, and client feedback identified by the CSNA. The strategies from this plan serve as a roadmap to guide FDBS in achieving its goals and priorities and realizing our vision to create a barrier-free environment for individuals with visual disabilities.

FDBS will continue to use funds that support innovation and expansion to sustain activities of the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. This includes sponsoring travel and administrative costs, meeting space, advertisement, interpreters and client satisfaction surveys.

The CSNA identified several barriers faced by individuals with disabilities, specifically those served by FDBS. Among recurring themes were barriers related to underserved target populations, access to AT, and fear of losing social security benefits. The strategic plan addresses each of these barriers. Specifically, activities include developing communications and outreach plans to reach unserved/underserved populations and to educate the public about services offered by FDBS. In 2019, FDBS entered into an agreement with Vispero for approximately 2,500 licenses to provide access to AT for individuals with vision impairments and workforce partners. Five senior rehabilitation specialists participated in a social security training in hopes of becoming certified as CWIC. This training provides detailed information regarding social security benefits and the effects employment has on such benefits. There is a competitive selection process for participation in these trainings and applicants must successfully complete an introductory course. Out of the 15 counselors who applied for the training, the organization selected five.

(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

FDBS Vocational Rehabilitation Program Goals
FDBS modified its state goals and priorities to better align with the agency's strategic plan. All goals for the FDBS employment program were determined using information from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, customer satisfaction survey, program data, leadership strategies, and other documentation. FDBS included input from the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, stakeholders, consumer feedback, employee feedback, and the RSA monitoring report during goal development. For 2020, the goals described below drove FDBS's activities and service delivery for the VR program.

Goal 1: Highest Client Achievement

Strategy 1.1: Secure opportunities for students and youth with disabilities to practice and improve workplace skills.
Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are included in the current VR contracts. By including these services, FDBS provides students and youth with disabilities opportunities to participate in work-based learning experiences, apprenticeships, and internships to improve workplace skills.

Strategy 1.2: Ensure clients participating in training and education programs are benefiting.
FDBS collaborates with CareerSource Florida and the Division of Public Schools to provide opportunities for training, education, and workplace activities. The agreement between FDBS, Division of Public Schools, and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation outlines details of these activities. CRPs must complete a Comprehensive Functional Assessment (CFA) on all clients receiving services under their contract. CFAs establish baseline skill levels and track functional gains/progress towards the client's goals. CRPs must complete CFAs within sixty (60) days from the date of eligibility determination for each client.

Strategy 1.3: Increase utilization of online job systems/portals to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.
Division staff train employees who provide VR services on how to use the TAP throughout the state. A monthly report captures the utilization of the TAP for tracking purposes. FDBS coordinates with the Abilities Work staff to increase employer relationships and placements, such as connecting employers referred by the Abilities Work help desk to the clients who are job ready.

Strategy 1.4: Encourage and track industry certifications, apprenticeships, post-secondary outcomes/ impacts, and explore expanded employment opportunities.
FDBS tracks industry certifications, apprenticeships (newer initiative), and post-secondary outcomes via the Aware case management system. The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) tracks continuing education units, food manager certifications, and vendor licenses. Counselors encourage clients to explore expanded employment opportunities and focus on career pathways for sustainable employment.

Strategy 1.5: Develop and implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Residential Rehabilitation Center.
A team of professional staff determined the PEP Model, developed by Dr. Karen Wolffe best meets the needs of FDBS's clients ages 14 to adulthood. The purpose of this program is to increase the number of blind and visually impaired individuals preparing to enter competitive integrated employment. The program achieves this through highly comprehensive and coordinated vocational rehabilitation services provided at the RC. These services include, but are not limited to, pre-employment training, career counseling, job readiness training, work experience opportunities, job shadowing, advocacy, self-awareness, and exposure to post-employment. The program is unique in that it establishes an action plan and follow-up for each client that involves the client, home-based counselors, and RC staff. The PEP at the Rehabilitation Center began in 2016. The RC conducts classes quarterly to increase the employment rate for visually impaired youth and adults. There were three PEP graduates in 2020 and three graduates in 2021. Of which, two are currently employed, one is in a work experience, and two are actively seeking employment.

Goal 2: Seamless Articulation & Maximum Access

Strategy 2.1: Increase the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.
FDBS strengthened its relationship with the Lighthouses to ensure appropriate and client-specific assistive technology is consistent with the needs of all clients and the IPE reflects this need. The FDBS monitors contracts with the Lighthouses and solicits client feedback via satisfaction surveys.

Strategy 2.2: Implement a comprehensive communication and outreach plan.
FDBS began the development of a comprehensive communication and outreach plan. Due to vacancies in key positions, the plan is not complete. Key staff are in place to accomplish this goal, which remains in the active strategic plan. The communications section uses data from the CSNA to create marketing strategies that reach underserved and unserved populations.

Strategy 2.3: Increase the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.
FDBS served 1,380 individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. This represents an increase of six from the prior year.

Figure 10.07
Clients Served by Service Category

Service Categories	Clients Served (SFY 2020-2021)
College Students	487
None (*regular FDBS- vocational rehabilitation clients)	3,567
Supported Employment	58
Transition (including Pre-Employment Transition)	563
Total	**4,675**

Strategy 2.4: Increase outreach services to underserved and unserved populations.
Each district identifies the unique underserved populations in their area. Each month, district staff target the identified unserved and underserved populations to increase services to consumers who fall in these categories. The District Administrators maintain a log of activities related to underserved populations and include this data in the monthly report submitted to the Program Administrator (PA). Outreach activities are included in the monthly report submitted to the PA who tracks this data and maintains a record for statewide analysis. The chart below depicts an increase in the number of clients served in all minority categories except Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Figure 10.08
Change in Number of Clients Served in Minority Groups

Minority Group	SFY 2016	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	Difference from previous year
African American	1,829	1,442	1,419	1,251	1,603	352
Hispanic	1,156	933	956	1,009	1,418	409
Asian	87	70	59	78	95	17
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders	9	9	3	5	0	-5

Strategy 2.5: Ensure client IPE goals are consistent with transportation resources.
FDBS created a list of transportation vendors based on feedback from each district office. Local district staff updates the list to ensure consumers have the transportation resources necessary to achieve their IPE goals.

Goal 3: Skilled Workforce & Economic Development

Strategy 3.1: Develop and strengthen DBS employer relationships through employer outreach, support, education, and resources.
FDBS provides Employment Placement Specialists with a marketing toolkit to use when meeting with potential employers and CareerSource Florida Network staff. Employers receive education regarding sponsored programs/services with the goal of increasing opportunities for clients seeking employment. The SBC seeks opportunities to form partnerships with employers via outreach activities. Outreach efforts include speaking with medical providers, schools, state agencies and businesses. The SBC provides education and training to these entities on the federal tax benefits, assistive technology and the ADA.

FDBS recognizes businesses that provide employment opportunities to consumers. Staff invites employed consumers seeking advancement/new career opportunities or unemployed consumers seeking employment to attend these events. Each district nominates at least one employer for the exemplary employer event held annually. The Director awards plaques to those selected as exemplary employers.

Strategy 3.2: Increase successful employment outcomes including self-employment outcomes for transition-age youth, adults, and seniors.
The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) strongly encourages youth to participate in training to become self-employed BEP vendors. The strategic plan goal is to increase enrollment of students and young adults in the BEP by 10% annually. When comparing SFY 2019-2020 to SFY 2020-2021, FDBS boasts a respectable number of successful outcomes. Closures increased by 68 from 822 to 890, which is highly commendable during an unprecedented pandemic. FDBS strengthened its relationship with CRPs and local employment networks in job placement related services. VR counselors and EPS staff use the TAP, an online platform that connects persons with disabilities seeking employment to businesses that are actively hiring. The following table represents the wage earnings of consumers over five years.

Figure 10.9
FDBS Performance Standards and Indicators

	FFY 2016	FFY 2017	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020	FFY 2021
Average # of Hours Worked per Week	27.76	28.94	29.96	30.24	31.07	30.84
Average Hourly Wage	$12.98	$13.85	$14.61	$14.69	$16.91	$16.63
Average Weekly Wage	$384.61	$405.21	$441.62	$456.62	$523.26	$543.65
Projected Average Annual Earnings at Placement	$19,999.86	$21,070.72	$22,964.30	$23,744.17	$27,209.67	$27,801.59
Average Case Cost	$8,288.05	$9,625.00	$9,215.26	$9,787.25	$8,535.55	$9,350.33

Strategy 3.3: Create successful job outcomes in the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).
FDBS determined one of the most important measurements of a successful BEP program is the percentage of recently licensed vendors remaining at their first facility for at least 12 months. This measure demonstrates training adequately prepared new licensees to start at a facility and stay. It is a good indicator of the individual's perseverance and on-the-job skills development.

Figure 10.10
Outcomes in Business Enterprise Program

	SFY 2016-2017	SFY 2017-2018	SFY 2018-2019	SFY 2019-2020	SFY 2020-2021
Gross Sales	$22,057,794	$22,526,780	$23,767,126	$20,344.763	$15,521,679
Gross Profit	$12,055,980	$12,312,635	$13,017,849	$11,059,709	$8,511,079
Average Vendor Earnings	$70,049	$69,340	$73,618	$62,357	$51,175
Number of new clients licensed	7	8	7	8	4
Number of clients awarded their first facility, regardless of the year licensed	6	10	10	5	3
Number of licensed vendors assigned	115	118	119	117	116
Number of those which were awarded facilities that were employed in the BEP at least 1 year	6 of 6 (100%)	7 of 9 (77.78%)	6 of 6 (100%)	5 of 5 (100%)	Not available until end of SFY 2021-22
% of increase from previous year	10.00%	(12.22%)	22.22%	0.00%	Not available until end of SFY 2021-22

Strategy 3.4: Support FDBS clients in becoming self-supporting.
The Independent Living Program (ages 18-54) and Older Blind Program (ages 55+) provide services to train visually impaired individuals on orientation and mobility, cooking, and other support (e.g., job placement, supported employment, purchase of adaptive equipment, etc.) to foster independent living goals of clients. These programs served 1,041 individuals collectively in SFY 2020.

Strategy 3.5: Strengthen statewide collaborative partnerships with core partners.
FDBS established multiple MOUs/interagency agreements with core partners that outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency. FDBS works with each CareerSource Florida local workforce development board to update these agreements annually to keep up with emerging industries and workforce changes.

Strategy 3.6: Develop mechanisms to maximize job placement effectiveness among Employment Placement Specialists (EPS) and contracted service providers.
FDBS requires all EPS to attend Employment Outcome Professionals II training conducted twice a year. The SBC arms the EPS with a toolkit of resources on building relationships with employers and other pertinent information. The EPS created desk manuals for additional training and tools. EPS, who uses the Abilities Work Help Desk, and the Division joined forces to increase referrals from businesses interested in hiring individuals who are blind or visually impaired as part of the Employment First Initiative. FDBS also maintains a partnership with the National Employment Team (the NET) and its southeast subcommittee to connect with businesses on a national and regional level.

Strategy 3.7: Support and track successful employment outcomes for blind Floridians with significant and most significant disabilities.
The SBC tracks successful employment on a monthly basis. The SBC compiles this data and sends a monthly report of to the district to encourage staff to meet FDBS's goal. Employment program staff use the Aware case management system to track clients who are ready for employment. The SBC pulls this information from Aware and puts it into a bi-weekly report.

Strategy 3.8 Adopt and Modify the Vermont Progress Employment Model.
Although FDBS did not implement the Vermont Model, strategies of this model were instrumental in expanding employment outcomes for some of the most difficult to place clients.

Strategy 3.9 Identify an approach to expedite eligibility and service delivery to individuals who are at risk of losing employment.
Policy 2.16 Timeliness of Services describes the process to expedite the provision of services for clients at risk of losing employment. The EPS increased communication with employers – leading to a faster placement process. The communications section rebranded marketing materials and distributed them to field staff upon request.

Goal 4: Quality Efficient Services

Strategy 4.1: Increase staff development and continuing education.
Figure 10.11 illustrates the dates and types of training provided in 2021.

Figure 10.11
Training Offered in 2021

Date	Training Description
January 2021	AWARE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM Training
January 2021	Vocational Rehabilitation Call
January 2021	Strategic Plan Updates Meeting
February 2021	Quarterly DBS/DVR Meeting
February 2021	NCSAB Meeting
February 2021	FRCB Meeting
March 2021	Vocational Rehabilitation Call
March 2021	RSA Quarterly Data Dashboard Call
March 2021	NCSAB Transition Committee Meeting
April 2021	CSAVR Meeting
May 2021	Vocational Rehabilitation Call
May 2021	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Leadership Conference
May 2021	NCSAB Meeting
May 2021	FRCB Meeting
July 2021	FRCB Meeting
July 2021	Vocational Rehabilitation Call
August 2021	New Employee Training
September 2021	Vocational Rehabilitation Call
September 2021	RSA Quarterly Data Dashboard Call
October 2021	FRCB Meeting
November 2021	Vocational Rehabilitation Call
November 2021	New Employee Training

Strategy 4.2: Align DBS policies and procedures to new WIOA requirements.
The Bureau of Client Services has a policy team that meets quarterly to review policies as an ongoing process. The team updates policies as necessary to align with WIOA requirements and other evolving federal policies.

Strategy 4.3: Increase opportunities for data sharing and improve data validity and integrity.
FDBS has a State Wage Data Sharing Agreement with core partners. The purpose of this agreement is to establish/implement operating conditions and procedures related to access of wage data for performance accountability. The core partners have a separate data sharing agreement that establishes conditions, safeguards, and requirements under which the parties agree to exchange confidential information with each other for administering their respective programs.

Strategy 4.4: Decrease federal and state audit findings.
FDBS has a quality assurance (QA) protocol specific to program services. The protocol activities include a remote desk and district onsite reviews to identify and resolve potential issues prior to federal/state audits. The QA team monitors compliance via monthly case reviews. Case reviews aim to achieve a compliance rate of 96%, exceeding the standard compliance rate of 90%. The QA team shares details of findings from case reviews with local district staff and provides additional training as necessary. This process decreases audit findings and ensures training focuses on areas specific to deficiencies.

Strategy 4.5: Develop strong fiscal policies and procedures to promote responsible stewardship of available resources and address WIOA requirements.
FDBS commissioned a fee/sustainability study completed by San Diego State University Research Foundation to compare service costs across the nation. The study is expected to conclude in the winter of 2021. Using the outcomes of this study, FDBS will revisit the current fee structure. FDBS has a case service allocation protocol, which determines district allocations and ensures each district spends funds appropriately. To address appropriate allocation disbursements, the Operations and Management Section evaluates historical expenditure data (e.g., number of clients served, services provided, contractual agreements, Business Enterprise Program expenditures, and social change). FDBS developed policies for prior approval and internal control to promote responsible stewardship of resources.

Strategy 4.6: Strengthen contract language to ensure increased contractor accountability, improve resource allocations, address WIOA regulations, and encourage maximum achievement of consumer independence.
FDBS executed Pre-ETS contracts with CRPs requiring employer outreach activities and work experiences to address WIOA regulations. CRPs must meet stringent deliverables and demonstrate program success plus client progress.

Strategy 4.7: Strengthen contract monitoring activities and procedures/protocol to reflect new requirements.
The contracts team updated the contract manual to create stronger procedures/protocols in 2020.

Strategy 4.9: Improve employee workplace environment.
FDBS implemented employee onboarding and mentoring processes statewide. Employees drafted desk manuals for succession planning and to capture organizational knowledge. Newly hired employees receive a copy of the desk manual for their position.

Factors that Impeded the Achievement of Goals

Strategy 1.4: Increase consumer participation in industry certifications, apprenticeships, and post-secondary outcomes/impacts.
FDBS did not achieve this goal due to the temporary closure of CRP locations, some schools, and many businesses during the pandemic. FDBS revved up its activities around apprenticeships by working in collaboration with an interagency partner to educate counselors and other staff about these programs. In addition, FDBS made changes to the Aware case management system allowing counselors to track apprenticeship activities.

Strategy 2.3: Increase the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.
FDBS served 662 individuals with a significant disability in 2019 and 599 in 2020 – a decrease of 63. There were 744 individuals with most significant disabilities served in 2019 and 775 in 2020 – an increase of 31. This data demonstrates FDBS met half of this goal.

Strategy 4.2: Incorporate elements of the common performance measures into employee expectations and evaluations.
In 2020, FDBS added elements of the common performance measures to the performance expectations of VR (employment program) staff.

Other factors that impeded the achievement of FDBS's goals were as follows.

- FDBS has continued providing uninterrupted services since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, online service delivery replaced many face-to-face meetings and trainings. This impeded delivery for those who lacked access to technology and technology training. With uncertainties related to COVID-19, some clients declined face-to-face services or put their training and/or vocational pursuits on hold.
- As a precaution, FDSB also temporarily shifted residential training into an online format.

The pandemic has presented challenges with filling vacant positions. This accompanied by lower salaries/wages, and staff turnover had an impact on some program outcomes. Supported Employment Program Goals:
For the 2020, the goals described below drove FDBS's activities and service delivery for the Supported Employment program.

Goal 1: Highest Client Achievement

Strategy 1.3: Increase utilization of online job systems/portals to expose employers to job ready FDBS consumers.
The SBC works with the district staff to ensure clients who are job-ready have uploaded resumes in the TAP. Employment Placement Specialists and counselors refer job seekers to other online tools, such as the Labor Market Information (LMI), National Employment Team (NET), Employ Florida and NSITE.

Strategy 1.5: Develop and implement an Employment Skills Training Program at the Rehabilitation Center.
The Rehabilitation Center provides employment training under the PEP and EEP programs. The PEP focuses on preparing clients for the workforce by training clients on interviewing, completing applications, professional presentation, etc. The EEP provides refreshers on skills obtained during the PEP.

Goal 2: Seamless Articulation & Maximum Access

Strategy 2.1: Increase the provision of accessibility tools, awareness, and regular follow-up with consumers to ensure equality in educational experiences and vocational opportunities.
FDBS has a license agreement with Vispero to provide accessibility software tools. The core partners and clients receive a link to register and download the software license. The agency or client can install the software on up to three computers.

Strategy 2.3: Increase the number of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities receiving services.
FDBS served 662 individuals with a significant disability in 2019 and 599 in 2020 – a decrease of 63. There were 744 individuals with most significant disabilities served in 2019 and 775 in 2020 – an increase of 31. This data demonstrates FDBS met half of this goal. The decrease is mostly attributable to the pandemic and the termination of the contract with the Conklin Center. The Conklin Center provided the bulk of services consumed by individuals with most significant disabilities. This created a small gap in services as FDBS shifted these individuals to the Rehabilitation Center.

Goal 3: Skilled Workforce & Economic Development

Strategy 3.7: Support and track successful employment outcomes for blind Floridians with significant and most significant disabilities.
FDBS uses the Aware case management system to track outcomes for all clients enrolled in the employment program.

Strategy 3.9 Identify an approach to expedite eligibility and service delivery to individuals who are at risk of losing employment.
Policy 2.16 Timeliness of Services describes the process to expedite the provision of services for clients at risk of losing employment.

Strategy 4.7: Strengthen contract monitoring activities and procedures/protocol to reflect new requirements.
The contracts team updated the contract manual to create stronger procedures/protocols in 2020.

Factors that Impeded the Achievement of Goals

- FDBS has continued providing uninterrupted services since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, online service delivery replaced many face-to-face meetings and trainings. This impeded delivery for those who lacked access to technology and technology training. With uncertainties related to COVID-19, some clients declined face-to-face services or put their training and/or vocational pursuits on hold.
- As a precaution, FDBS also temporarily shifted residential training into an online format.
- The pandemic has presented challenges with filling vacant positions. This accompanied by lower salaries/wages, and staff turnover had an impact on some program outcomes.

FDBS tracks its performance on the accountability measures outlined in Section 116 of WIOA via the Aware case management system. The following table illustrates performance on these measures for the previous program years.

Figure 10.12
Performance Standards and Indicators

	Successful VR Closures	Number Found Employed 2nd QTR after Exit Date	Percent Found Employed 2nd QTR after Exit Date	Median Earnings for Clients Found Employed 2nd QTR after Exit Date	Number Found Employed 4th QTR after Exit Date	Percent Found Employed 4th QTR after Exit Date
FFY 2018-2019	878	508	57.86%	$21,132	443	50.46%
FFY 2019-2020	832	462	55.53%	$22,698	365	43.87%
FFY 2020-2021	781	86	11.01%	$24,474	0	0.00%

	Median Earnings for Clients Found Employed 4th QTR after Exit Date	Number Obtained Postsecondary Credential while in Program or within One Year after Exit Date	Percent Obtained Postsecondary Credential while in Program or within One Year after Exit Date	Number Found Employed by Same Employer One Year after Exit Date	Percent Found Employed by Same Employer One Year After Exit Date
FFY 2018-2019	$22,816	10	1.14%	352	40.09%
FFY 2019-2020	$23,824	4	0.48%	270	32.45%
FFY 2020-2021	$0	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

*Note: The 2020-2021 data is incomplete as this information is not available yet.

Figure 10.13
Additional Standards Outlined in FDBS's Long-Range Program Plan

Approved Performance Measures	Approved Standard SFY 2019-2020	Actual Numbers SFY 2019-2020	Approved Standard SFY 2020-2021	Actual SFY 2020-2021
Number/percent of rehabilitation customers gainfully employed at least 90 days (regardless of wage earned)	747/68.3%	888/63.16%	747/68.3%	822/59.83%
Number/percent rehabilitation customers placed in competitive employment (at or above minimum wage)	654/64.3%	881/99.21%	654/ 64.3%	814/99.03%
Projected average annual earnings of rehabilitation customers at placement	$16,500	$23,588	$16,500	$26,911

FDBS shifted priorities in 2021 based on new legislation – most notably HB 1507. While the four main goals remain the same, FDBS, in collaboration with core partners, developed strategies to guide activities of HB 1507 that support requirements prescribed by this bill. These strategies include the following:

- Expand the state's talent pipeline through the attainment of credentials of value and the acquisition of postsecondary certifications, industry-recognized credentials, and degrees.
- Promote employers' access to the talents and abilities of individuals with disabilities.
- Coordinate resources to accommodate employees in the workplace and assist with maintaining/advancing their careers successfully.
- Integrate Divisions of Blind Services and Vocational Rehabilitation within Florida's public higher education institutions.
- Deliver services via an integrated case management system enabling access for core partners to help clients/jobseekers/students access information and help case managers provide holistic services.

Innovation and Expansion

The FDBS used innovation and expansion funds to support FRCB in FFY 2020-2021. The following table illustrates expenses for all FRCB meetings during this period.

Figure 10.14
FRCB Expenses

Expense Category	Oct -20	Nov -20	Dec -20	Jan -21	Feb -21	Mar -21	Apr -21	May -21	Jun -21	Jul -21	Aug -21	Sep -21	Total
Council Travel	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Client Satisfaction Survey	$13,500	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$13,500	$27,000
Advertising	$0	$0	$222.88	$107.52	$26.32	$0	$148.82	$47.88	$0	$0	$0	$96.04	$673.12
Venue Meeting Space	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Supplies	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Interpreters	$0	$0	$0	$0	$1755.00	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total	**$13,500**	**$0**	**$222.88**	**$107.52**	**$7546.42**	**$26.32**	**$148.82**	**$47.88**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$13,596.04**	**$27,673.12**

A summary of FRCB Accomplishments and Activities for calendar year 2020-2021 includes:

- The FRCB continues to review, analyze, and advise on policy decisions and evaluate the effectiveness of the FDBS to ensure meaningful access to and use of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs for Floridians who are blind or visually impaired. The FRCB functions to create a positive impact on the fairness, efficiency, and accessibility of services through the evaluation of consumer feedback and the FDBS' performance.
- As of May 1, 2021, the FRCB has 12 voting members. Robert Doyle, the Director of the Florida Division of Blind Services, and Nancy Bateh, VR Counselor, serve on the Council as ex-officio members. The Council had three members whose terms expired as of August 31, 2021 – leaving nine voting members on the FRCB.
- The FRCB continues to recruit qualified individuals to complete the application process for consideration and appointment by the governor to serve on the Council and received 10 new appointments in May 2021.
- During the FFY 2020-2021, the FRCB had to alter its quarterly meeting schedule in select cities around the state due to COVID-19. The Council held four virtual/teleconference meetings focusing on the host areas, Ft. Myers on October 29, 2020, Pensacola on February 25, 2021, West Palm Beach on May 27, 2021, and Orlando on July 29, 2021.
- The FRCB continues to serve as an effective vehicle for cultivating meaningful partnerships between the FDBS, stakeholders, and consumers by holding public forums at our meetings. During 2020-2021, the FRCB scheduled and held four public forums.
- During the year, the FRCB received regular updates on an initiative to develop a vocational evaluation tool for the blind sponsored by the Blind Services Foundation.
- The Council continues to oversee the development and implementation of the Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS). The FRCB contracts with Florida State University Survey Foundry to conduct the CSS. Dr. Minna Jia presented the annual report for SFY 2020-21 during the virtual meeting on October 28, 2021.

Meeting Dates and Locations

- October 29, 2020 – Ft. Myers (Virtual TEAMS Meeting)
- February 25, 2021 – Pensacola (Virtual TEAMS Meeting)
- May 27, 2021 – West Palm Beach (Virtual TEAMS Meeting)
- July 29, 2021 – Orlando (Virtual TEAMS Meeting)

Quarterly Meeting Agenda Items:

- Welcome, Introductions, and Pledge of Allegiance
- Adoption of Agenda
- Director's Report: Division of Blind Services Updates
- District Administrator's Report
- Employer Recognition
- Local Community Rehabilitation Program Reports
- Client Satisfaction Survey Data Updates
- Division of Blind Services State Plan Updates
- Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Outcome Updates
- Public Transportation Updates
- Bureau of Business Enterprise Update
- FDBS Budget Report and Legislative Updates
- Blind Services Foundation Update
- Updates on Outreach to Underserved/Unserved
- Strategic Plan Discussions
- Library Patron Trends Update

Other accomplishments for the VR program for 2020-2021 include the following.

- Assisted 890 consumers in obtaining competitive integrated employment (successful closures) in SFY 2020-2021, despite the economic downturn, high unemployment rates, and the current pandemic.
- Social security reimbursements for individuals obtaining substantial gainful activity reached close to $2.5 million (144% increase from 2019).
- Provided services to 488 college students.
- Helped 348 clients participate in a work-based learning experience.
- Served over 5,000 consumers in the VR program.
- The median wage for consumers is consistently above the state minimum wage.
- Updated the Aware case management system to include a consumer portal to facilitate communication between clients and their counselors.

(q) Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services

FDBS elected to defer SE funds to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation due to administrative burden. However, FDBS provides residential services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who require ongoing support to meet their employment goals via a contract with one vendor (the Conklin Davis Center for the Visually Impaired). FDBS issues authorizations – when necessary – to ensure continued services for all consumers via other providers throughout the state. These services are funded using basic 110 funds. SE services are for clients with the most significant disability who need support to maintain competitive integrated employment. SE services begin after job placement and may last up to 24 months (or longer if deemed necessary). The FDBS provides SE singly or in combination and assists eligible individuals in gaining/maintaining competitive integrated employment.

Quality

The FDBS has elected to defer SE funds to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation due to administrative burden. However, FDBS provides supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who require ongoing support to meet their employment goals via a contract with the Conklin Davis Center for the Blind and the Rehabilitation Center. FDBS issues authorizations to ensure continued SE services for all consumers via other providers throughout the state. SE services begin after job placement and may last up to 24 months (or longer if deemed necessary). Contractors provide SE singly or in combination with other services to assist eligible individuals in gaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment.

FDBS is committed to providing quality services to this population. Counselors support individuals in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests. Counselors help individuals pursue goals detailed in the IPE by using supported employment resources to the individual's best advantage. As appropriate, consumers and families are actively involved in assessment, planning, and decision-making throughout the service delivery process.

FDBS provides ongoing training for staff and updates policies and processes to ensure efficient services. The quality assurance team conducts quality assurance reviews consisting of onsite and remote desk reviews. The reviews focus on adherence to state policies, compliance with federal regulations, sufficient case documentation, IPE development timelines, plan amendments and required signatures, eligibility determination, activities tied to the IPE, approval of authorizations, etc.

Scope

The scope of supported employment services varies based on the amount, intensity and type of support each person needs to maintain, retain or obtain employment. Under supported employment services, FDBS provides the most intensive services required to help individuals with the most significant disabilities obtain competitive integrated employment based on the individual's choice. Assistance to this population is comprised of an intensive array of services – conducted in person – for blind and visually impaired individuals who require complex services, including youth with the most significant disabilities. FDBS provides these services for a period not to exceed 24 months but can be extended under special circumstances with the consent of the individual to achieve objectives of the rehabilitation plan. Counselors work with the consumers to design services based on their needs and desires. These services may include:

- Individual Assessment;
- Job Coaching and Development;
- Assistive Technology, including repair and maintenance;
- Intensive on-the-job training;
- Employability and Social Skills Training;
- Transportation Assistance;
- Money Management;
- Follow-up services with employers and trainees; and
- Formal and informal work site related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication).

Extent
FDBS provides services based on available resources. Community service providers are responsible for funding ongoing support services. The comprehensive statewide needs assessment and analysis of performance data/data provided by agency partners (APD, CareerSource Florida, DCF, and DVR) determine the amount of services necessary to ensure FDBS meets consumer/state needs.

Transition to Extended Services
Transition to extended services occurs a minimum of 90 days after "stabilization," which is defined as stabilized in employment at or above minimum wage with 20% or less support in the workplace from program staff for a period of 90 days. A client is "successfully rehabilitated" when s/he maintains job placement for 60 days after transitioning to extended services. FDBS provides extended services to youth for four years or until age 25, whichever comes first. The counselor, provider and client should agree that the individual is progressing in employment and demonstrating signs of being successful before transitioning to extended services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators (Blind)

	Vocational Rehabilitation Program (DBS)			
	Program Year: 2022		Program Year: 2023	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	48.6%	TBD	48.6%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	47.9%	TBD	47.9%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	$3,750	TBD	$3,750	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	9.0%	TBD	9.0%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	28.2%	TBD	28.2%	TBD

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS & ASSURANCES

The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections l0l(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:

1.	Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16){A) of the Rehabilitation Act;
2.	Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan and Its Supplement: The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections l0l(a)(l),(22),(23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan;

3.	Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected): 1. Is an independent State commission. 2. Has established a State Rehabilitation Council- YES c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (No) f. The shared funding and administration of join programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (No) g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan? (Yes) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan. h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(l1) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. 1. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. 2. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections lOl(a)(lS), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. 3. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities. 4. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4.	Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, assures that it will: a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(S)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act. c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes) d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. e. Comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act. g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act. h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed wither in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) OF the Rehabilitation Act. i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs. 1. With respect to students with disabilities, the State, has developed and will implement, i. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and ii. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and iii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(2S)).
5.	Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement: a. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The Department of Education assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section lOl(a)(l0) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act. c. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self- Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6.	a. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program: The Department of Education assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under Title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the Department of Education and division of Vocational Rehabilitation will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The Department of Education assures that it will use funds made available under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.	a. Provision of Supported Employment Services: The Department of Education assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The Department of Education assures that: 1. the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act 2. an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with Title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Florida Department of Education

Richard Corcoran

Richard Corcoran (Feb 8, 2022 20:02 EST)

DATE: Feb 8, 2022

Commissioner Richard Corcoran

1.	Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16){A) of the Rehabilitation Act;
2.	Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan and Its Supplement: The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections l0l(a)(l),(22),(23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan;
3.	Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected): 1. Is an independent State commission. 2. Has established a State Rehabilitation Council- YES c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (No) f. The shared funding and administration of join programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (No) g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan? (Yes) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan. h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(l1) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. 1. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. 2. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections lOl(a)(lS), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. 3. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities. 4. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4.	Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, assures that it will: a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(S)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is presentin the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act. c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes) d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. e. Comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act. g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act. h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed wither in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) OF the Rehabilitation Act. i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State, has developed and will implement, xi. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and xii. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and xiii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(2S)).
5.	Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement: a. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The Department of Education assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section lOl(a)(l0) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act. c. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self- Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6.	a. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program: The Department of Education assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under Title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the Department of Education and division of Vocational Rehabilitation will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The Department of Education assures that it will use funds made available under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.	a. Provision of Supported Employment Services: The Department of Education assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. b. The Department of Education assures that: iii. the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act iv. an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with Title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Florida Department of Education

Richard Corcoran

Richard Corcoran (Feb 8, 2022 20:02 EST)

DATE: Feb 8, 2022

Commissioner Richard Corcoran

OMB Approval No. 0348-0040

ASSURANCES - NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0348-0040), Washington, DC 20503

PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET. SEND IT TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED BY THE SPONSORING AGENCY.

Note: Certain of these assurances may not be applicable to your project or program. If you have questions, please contact the awarding agency. Further, certain Federal awarding agencies may require applicants to certify to additional assurances. If such is the case, you will be notified.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant I certify that the applicant:

1. Has the legal authority to apply for Federal assistance, and the institutional, managerial and financial capability (including funds sufficient to pay the non-Federal share of project cost) to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of the project described in this application.

2. Will give the awarding agency, the Comptroller General of the United States, and if appropriate, the State, through any authorized representative, access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the award; and will establish a proper accounting system in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards or agency directives.

3. Will establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain.

4. Will initiate and complete the work within the applicable time frame after receipt of approval of the awarding agency.

5. Will comply with the Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. ɜɜ4728-4763) relating to prescribed standards for merit systems for programs funded under one of the 19 statutes or regulations specified in Appendix A of OPM's Standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration (5 C.F.R. 900, Subpart F).

6. Will comply with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination. These include but are not limited to: (a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin; (b) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. ɜɜ1681-1683, and 1685-1686), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; (c) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. ɜ794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicaps; (d) the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. ɜɜ 6101-6107), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age; (e) the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-255), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of drug abuse; (f) the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-616), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of alcohol abuse or alcoholism; (g) ɜɜ 523 and 527 of the Public Health Service Act of 1912 (42 U.S.C. ɜɜ 290 dd-3 and 290 ee 3), as amended, relating to confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records; (h) Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. ɜ 3601 et seq.), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing; (i) any other nondiscrimination provisions in the specific statute(s) under which application for Federal assistance is being made; and (j) the requirements of any other nondiscrimination statute(s) which may apply to the application.

7. Will comply, or has already complied, with the requirements of Titles II and III of the uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-646) which provide for fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced or whose property is acquired as a result of Federal or federally assisted programs. These requirements apply to all interests in real property acquired for project purposes regardless of Federal participation in purchases.

8. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. ɜɜ1501-1508 and 7324-7328) which limit the political activities of employees whose principal employment activities are funded in whole or in part with Federal funds.

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9. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. ȝȝ276a to 276a-7), the Copeland Act (40 U.S.C. ȝ276c and 18 U.S.C. ȝȝ874) and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. ȝȝ 327-333), regarding labor standards for federally assisted construction subagreements.

10. Will comply, if applicable, with flood insurance purchase requirements of Section 102(a) of the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-234) which requires recipients in a special flood hazard area to participate in the program and to purchase flood insurance if the total cost of insurable construction and acquisition is $10,000 or more.

11. Will comply with environmental standards which may be prescribed pursuant to the following: (a) institution of environmental quality control measures under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) and Executive Order (EO) 11514; (b) notification of violating facilities pursuant to EO 11738; (c) protection of wetlands pursuant to EO 11990; (d) evaluation of flood hazards in floodplains in accordance with EO 11988; (e) assurance of project consistency with the approved State management program developed under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. ȝȝ1451 et seq.); (f) conformity of Federal actions to State (Clear Air) Implementation Plans under Section 176(c) of the Clear Air Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. ȝȝ7401 et seq.); (g) protection of underground sources of drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended, (P.L. 93-523); and (h) protection of endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, (P.L. 93-205).

12. Will comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. ȝȝ1721 et seq.) related to protecting components or potential components of the national wild and scenic rivers system.

13. Will assist the awarding agency in assuring compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. ȝ470), EO 11593 (identification and protection of historic properties), and the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. ȝȝ469a-1 et seq.).

14. Will comply with P.L. 93-348 regarding the protection of human subjects involved in research, development, and related activities supported by this award of assistance.

15. Will comply with the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-544, as amended, 7 U.S.C. ȝȝ2131 et seq.) pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of warm blooded animals held for research, teaching, or other activities supported by this award of assistance.

16. Will comply with the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. ȝȝ4801 et seq.) which prohibits the use of lead-based paint in construction or rehabilitation of residence structures.

17. Will cause to be performed the required financial and compliance audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and OMB Circular No. A-133, AAudits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations.ȝ

18. Will comply with all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations and policies governing this program.

Signature of Authorized Certifying Individual	Title
Richard Corcoran Richard Corcoran (Feb 8, 2022 20:02 EST) Commissioner Richard Corcoran	Commissioner
Applicant Organization	Date Submitted
Florida Department of Education	Feb 8, 2022

APPENDIX 1 – PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS

Performance measurements are negotiated annually with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education. The below are expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. Please note "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is not included. Negotiations for that metric are TBD per the Department of Labor. Performance measurements negotiations for PY 2022 and 2023 are yet to be completed with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education.

Employment in 2nd Quarter After Exit	2022 Proposed Level	2022 Negotiated Level	2023 Expected Level	2023 Negotiated Level
Adults	85.50%	TBD	85.5%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	85.0%	TBD	85.0%	TBD
Youth	79.5%	TBD	79.5%	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	65.0%	TBD	65.0%	TBD
AEFLA	29.3%	TBD	30.3%	TBD

Employment in 4th Quarter After Exit	2022 Proposed Level	2022 Negotiated Level	2023 Expected Level	2023 Negotiated Level
Adults	61.3%	TBD	84.5%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	60.8%	TBD	80.5%	TBD
Youth	74.0%	TBD	74.0%	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	55.0%	TBD	64.2%	TBD
AEFLA	27.0%	TBD	27.0%	TBD

Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	2022 Proposed Level	2022 Negotiated Level	2023 Expected Level	2023 Negotiated Level
Adults	$7,000	TBD	$7,000	TBD
Dislocated Workers	$7,100	TBD	$7,100	TBD
Youth	$3,200	TBD	$3,200	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	$5,100	TBD	$5,100	TBD
AEFLA	$4,395	TBD	$4,395	TBD

Credential Attainment Rate	2022 Proposed Level	2022 Negotiated Level	2023 Expected Level	2023 Negotiated Level
Adults	22.1%	TBD	68.0%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	70.0%	TBD	70.0%	TBD
Youth	44.9%	TBD	76.5%	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
AELFA	11.6%	TBD	12.6%	TBD

Measurable Skill Gains	2022 Proposed Level	2022 Negotiated Level	2023 Expected Level	2023 Negotiated Level
Adults	58.0%	TBD	60%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	60.0%	TBD	60%	TBD
Youth	55.0%	TBD	60%	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
AEFLA-ABE	26.0%	TBD	27.0%	TBD
AEFLA-ESOL	27.6%	TBD	28.7%	TBD

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