



## Florida: Reimagining Education and Career Help

*Overview of key requirements, accomplishments to date and work underway to implement the landmark 2021 REACH Act and expand workforce education opportunities under 2023's Senate Bill 240.*

Florida's Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act is a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing access, alignment, and accountability across the state's workforce development system.

The REACH Act was unanimously approved by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor DeSantis in 2021. In 2023, Senate Bill 240, known also as REACH Act 2.0, became law and expanded opportunities for work-based learning as well as career and technical education. Together, these state laws further solidify Florida's position as the number one state for higher education and are advancing efforts toward Florida's goal of becoming the number one state for workforce education by 2030.

The following are highlights of the accomplishments and work currently underway to address provisions of the [REACH Act](#) and [REACH Act 2.0](#):

- Establishment of the REACH Office within the Executive Office of the Governor to facilitate coordination and alignment of entities that contribute to the state's talent pipeline system through education, training, and support services. Among the state workforce development entities and agencies recognized in the REACH Act are CareerSource Florida, local workforce development boards, one-stop career centers, FloridaCommerce, Florida Department of Education, and Florida Department of Children and Families.
- Approval of the [Florida Workforce System Transformation Plan](#) by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors.
  - Implementation of the plan will streamline and modernize the CareerSource Florida network, enhancing alignment and accountability, to address expectations and requirements of both the REACH Act and REACH Act 2.0. The plan:
    - Directs a reduction in the number of local workforce development boards from 24 to 21 to eliminate multiple layers of administrative entities and improve coordination, establish consistent standards to improve accountability, and provide greater flexibility in allocating resources to maximize the use of public funds.
    - Requires system-wide improvements for customer service consistency and better leveraging of public funds, including, but not limited to:
      - ✓ Administrative cost arrangements among planning regions.
      - ✓ Consistent contract and procurement policies and procedures.
      - ✓ The use of state-established templates for contracts or other methods of ensuring all contract mechanisms follow standards established by CareerSource Florida.
      - ✓ Leveraging buying power to achieve cost savings for employee benefits, including, but not limited to, health insurance, life insurance, and retirement.
    - Requires regional planning to optimize opportunities for regional economic growth.
- Assignment of [letter grades](#) for local workforce development boards based on criteria including performance accountability measures, return on investment, and improvement of the long-term self-sufficiency of participants.
- Establishment of additional accountability measures for local workforce development boards, including board leadership and governance, staggered term limits, composition, and certification.



- Establishment of the [Florida Credentials Review Committee](#) by the CareerSource Florida Board to identify degree and nondegree credentials of value for approval by the state workforce board and inclusion on a [Master Credentials List](#).
  - The inaugural Master Credentials List, a comprehensive list of state-approved degree and non-degree credentials of value that prepare Floridians for in-demand occupations, was approved and delivered to the State Board of Education in February 2023. Updates to the list are made on a quarterly basis.
  - The REACH Act 2.0 added a requirement that the director of the REACH Office serve as chair of the Credentials Review Committee and authorized the Credentials Review Committee to consider additional evidence to identify credentials of value for agricultural occupations.
- Establishment of the [Open Door Grant Program](#) to create a demand-driven supply of credentialed workers for high-demand occupations and expand the affordability of workforce training, certification, and credentialing programs.

Additionally, REACH Act 2.0:

- Specifies that each Florida school board must provide high school students with the option to enroll in at least one work-based learning opportunity.
- Creates additional opportunities for work-based learning and apprenticeships.
- Incentivizes and promotes career and technical education in middle and high school.
- Creates a tax credit for companies that bring on apprentices, pre-apprentices, or student interns.
- Adds a workers compensation insurance premium reimbursement for companies bringing on students in work-based learning.

Collaborative work currently underway includes:

- Coordination by the REACH Office with the Department of Education, FloridaCommerce, and CareerSource Florida to:
  - Expand apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and other work-based learning models.
  - Streamline efforts to recruit and onboard new apprentices, pre-apprentices, students, and employers interested in work-based learning opportunities, including, but not limited to, conducting outreach with business leaders, local governments, and education providers.
  - Ensure eligible apprenticeship sponsors include educational institutions, local workforce development boards, community, or faith-based organizations and associations.
- Creation of an education and industry consortium of representatives of educational entities and businesses in the designated service delivery area for each local workforce development board.
  - Consortium members are appointed by the local workforce development board chair.
  - Each local consortium provides quarterly reports on educational programs and industry needs. Local workforce development boards consider these reports to determine the most effective ways to grow, retain, and attract talent to the service delivery area.
- Submission of recommendations by the [Florida Talent Development Council](#) on best practices for collaboration among school boards, local workforce development boards, and local businesses and business groups to facilitate work-based learning opportunities for middle and high school students. The council, administered by FloridaCommerce, will provide a report on workforce-based learning opportunities to the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2023.