

**Agency for Workforce Innovation
Monthly Accomplishments for March 2009
April 04, 2009**

This monthly report is the culmination of activities at the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) for March 2009. The accomplishments contained herein are directly linked to the Agency's Priorities as listed in the AWI Top-to-Bottom Review (May 2007). These priorities are as follows:

- 1. Building a culture that embraces and fully integrates all of our Agency services.**
 - 2. Increasing awareness about all of the services we provide: "Telling Our Story."**
 - 3. Eliminating duplicated services and improving partnerships.**
 - 4. Enhancing accountability and integrity.**
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1. Building a culture that embraces and integrates Agency Services

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- Office of General Counsel (OGC) staff reviewed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and provided guidance to administrative and program office staff on anticipated impact and implementation.

Workforce Services

- Staff developed implementation plans, one-page summaries, side-by-side summaries and Fast Facts that detail planning guidelines on how programs will implement changes under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

2. Increased awareness about services we provide: "Telling Our Story"

Director's Office

AWI's Interim Director, Deputy Director, Interim Deputy Director and other Agency staff participated in the following events:

- The Department of Children and Families "My ACCESS Account" presentation. My ACCESS Account is a website that allows users to view the status of their benefits, similar to online banking through a private institution.
- The National Governors Association Winter State Workforce Liaisons Meeting in Washington, D.C.
- The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Executive Director meeting, the ELAC Executive Director Association meeting and the ELAC meeting.

- The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Information Technology Committee meeting in Orlando.
- The National Consumer Protection Week - Florida's Public Service Commission partnered with WORKFORCE Plus to assist Florida's unemployed residents by showing them how to save money on their telephone and utility bills.
- A media conference call to discuss the January 2009 and February 2009 employment data releases. The Agency's economist Rebecca Rust was available to answer questions from the media on employment and job growth data, in addition to the annual benchmarking process that results in employment estimate revisions.
- A series of Regional Workforce Board Executive Directors Teleconference calls on the Stimulus Bill.
- A meeting with the Florida Economic Development Council's Executive Director, Amy Evancho, to discuss economic issues.
- The Florida State Employees Charitable Campaign announcement to the Cabinet for the 2008 campaign.
- Boys Town North Florida tour of five homes in Tallahassee that house youth who have suffered and survived abuse.
- The Children's Cabinet Meeting.
- Workforce Florida's Executive Committee Meeting Teleconference on the Economic Stimulus.
- The Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce Business Nuts & Bolts meeting regarding Key Projects for our Business Community; attendees were told about the economic stimulus and expediting the permitting process; Bryan Desloge, Leon County Commission Chairman and past Chamber Chairman, was the featured speaker.
- Workforce Florida's Rural Economic Development Initiative meeting and presentation of an Overview of the Century Commission's Cooperative Conservation Blueprint & Critical Lands Waters Identification Project.
- The United States Department of Labor's webinar - Implementing the Recovery Act in the Workforce Investment System.
- The 2008 Florida State Employees Charitable Campaign (FSECC) Awards Ceremony. The Agency for Workforce Innovation was the only agency to be awarded all four FSECC Awards for the category of 501-1000 employees: the Governor's Award, Chairman's Award, Achievement Award and Highest Number of Leadership Givers Award.

- The Take Stock in Children event where students and mentors from across the state join to celebrate the success of the program.
- The National Governors Association/Silver Edition Full Committee conference call hosted by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. The agenda was the "changing economic environment," and possible transition plans for 09 -10.
- The Tallahassee Economic Development Council hosted the Economic Development Council Forum. The event featured Senator Don Gaetz, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Florida's Economy.
- Children's Week Press Conference and Hanging of the Hands Dedication Ceremony.
- Kids Only Town Hall Meeting with Children's Cabinet and Lieutenant Governor.
- Comcast Interview with Interim Deputy Director Brittany Birken, PhD, regarding Early Learning and other Agency issues.
- Workforce Florida Inc. Youth Committee Teleconference, which is part of the Workforce Readiness and Performance Council.
- The Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Governance Council Meeting.
- Launch of the Agency's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) web page, in coordination with the Governor's ARRA initiatives and web site.

Unemployment Compensation (UC) Services

- Unemployment Compensation Services continued setting new records in the history of the Florida UC program.
 - The amount of benefits paid in February 2009 set a new monthly record and totaled \$395,487,561. This was a 237.6% increase compared to the February 2008 total of \$117,120,608.
 - The amount of benefits paid during week ending February 28, 2009 set a new weekly record and totaled \$104,236,732.
- **New Temporary Federal Additional Compensation Program**

- Section 2002 of Division B, Title II, the Assistance for Unemployed workers and Struggling Families Act, of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides a \$25 weekly supplement to the unemployment compensation of eligible claimants. The Federal Additional Compensation (FAC) is payable to individuals who are otherwise entitled to regular unemployment compensation for weeks of unemployment.
- UC Services developed a plan to implement the issuance of the \$25 payments. Actions critical to implementing this program included Information Technology (IT) programming to modify the systems to process the payments to eligible individuals.
- UC Services coordinated efforts to implement this program with help from IT, Pitney Bowes, Financial Management, and the Department of Financial Services. It was a joint effort to identify and complete all the tasks needed to ensure the FAC program would be operational as soon as possible.
- The first additional \$25 weekly payments were processed March 19, 2009. The initial amount issued totaled \$762,875 to 17,791 qualified individuals.

Legislative Affairs

- The Office of Legislative Affairs conducted 36 meetings with state Senators and Representatives in an effort to increase awareness of the Agency's services and to update the legislators on current Agency news. Those visits included meetings with the following:
 - Senator Fasano
 - Senator Gelber
 - Senator Justice
 - Senator Lawson
 - Senator Lynn
 - Representative Abruzzo
 - Representative Bembry
 - Representative Bovo
 - Representative Brise
 - Representative Bullard
 - Representative Bush
 - Representative Chestnut
 - Representative Coley
 - Representative Flores
 - Representative Galvano
 - Representative Gibbons
 - Representative Gibson
 - Representative Glorioso
 - Representative Gonzalez
 - Representative Horner
 - Representative Hudson
 - Representative Jenne
 - Representative Jones

- Representative Long
- Representative Nehr
- Representative Plakon
- Representative Precourt
- Representative Reed
- Representative Rivera
- Representative Roberson
- Representative Schenck
- Representative Scionti
- Representative Steinburg
- Representative Storms
- Representative Thompson
- Representative Weinstein

Office of Early Learning (OEL)

- The Office of Early Learning conducted numerous successful meetings in Tallahassee:
 - The Early Childhood Framework for the Future of Florida’s Children workgroup met to continue their collaborative and important strategic planning. Staff from many agencies, non-profit organizations, community colleges and other stakeholder groups came together for the fourth meeting of its kind, with plans to continue the collaboration until the creation of a statewide framework for early childhood has been accomplished.
 - The Office of Early Learning also met with executive directors of early learning coalitions to strategically discuss session and plan for upcoming budget considerations.
 - The Early Learning Advisory Council met and focused on legislative planning. Many members (Governor’s appointees) shared their successes at the Capitol as they took time to meet with key legislators while in Tallahassee. This was Interim Director Lorenzo’s inaugural ELAC meeting and it was a great opportunity for her to address the group and introduce her priorities for Early Learning.
- The Agency’s Office of Early Learning is collaborating with the Eco-Healthy Child Care (EHCC) program in the EHCC efforts to ensure that child care settings are as environmentally healthy as possible. Child care centers and family child care homes across the nation are showing their commitment to reducing children’s exposure to toxins and other environmental health hazards. Florida is one of the pilot states participating in this program and so far, about 150 Florida providers have been endorsed as Eco-Healthy Child Care Providers, serving 7,644 children. To assist child care providers in becoming “Eco-Healthy,” coalition staff and other early learning partners can register to become Eco-Healthy Child Care Program Trainers. To learn more about the Eco-Healthy Child Care (EHCC) Program, visit their website @ <http://www.oeonline.org/our-work/kidshealth/ehcc>.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- OGC staff responded to customer questions and/or requests for information regarding a number of issues, including:
 - Minimum wage requirements and filing wage and hour complaints;
 - Whether the Agency can reconsider an appeal for Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits after the decision becomes final;
 - The Agency's duty to pay an expired warrant;
 - Breach of contract between a private employer and contract employees;
 - Training assistance programs for veterans;
 - Assistance with UC claims;
 - Liability for UC payments for laid-off county school board employees;
 - Procedure for requesting a hearing regarding a workforce board decision;
 - Garnishment of an Agency employee's wages.

Labor Market Statistics

- Labor Market Statistics produced and released January and February 2009 Florida employment and unemployment statistics.

3. Eliminating duplicated services and improving partnerships

Office of Early Learning (OEL)

- Rulemaking - The Policy Unit, in conjunction with the Office of General Council, held a rulemaking workshop and a public hearing on three Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program rules on March 12, 2009. The workshop and public hearing were held in conjunction with the quarterly meetings of the Early Learning Advisory Council and the Coalition Executive Directors to ensure optimal input was received from stakeholders. The rules discussed were:
 - **Low Performing Providers in the VPK Program:** The proposed rule will implement an improvement plan process for VPK providers who fail to achieve minimum statewide kindergarten readiness rates, will provide procedures by which coalitions and school districts approve the improvement plans, will place providers on probation and require corrective actions, and will remove providers from eligibility to deliver the VPK program due to remaining on probation beyond the time permitted.
 - **Uniform Attendance Policy for Funding the VPK Program:** The purpose of the proposed rule is to revise rule 60BB-8.204, F.A.C., to incorporate recent legislative amendments by establishing a minimum requirement for student attendance of eighty percent of the total program hours for the program type in which a student is enrolled, redefining a student's absence for good cause, and providing for methods of payment depending upon student attendance.
 - **Substitute Instructors for the VPK Program:** The purpose of the proposed rule is to establish the required qualifications of substitute instructors for the VPK program for the school-year and summer VPK program types and to define the circumstances and time limits for which a VPK provider may assign a substitute instructor to a VPK classroom.

- **Variance and Waiver Requests:** The Policy Unit, in conjunction with the Office of General Council, continues to accept and review for legal sufficiency coalition-submitted petitions for variances and waivers. The Policy Unit also coordinates with the Agency clerk to notice the Department of State and to publish the petitions in the Florida Administrative Weekly. While the Policy Unit awaits the expiration of the statutorily required comment period, it proceeds with data analyses in order to continue to the next step of order granting or denial. Coalitions have submitted petitions for variances of Rule 60BB-4.210(1), F.A.C. pertaining to a 30-day break in employment during which the payment of SR services will be covered. Coalitions have also submitted waivers of Rule 60BB-8.201(3), F.A.C., whereby coalitions request to allow providers to register children for the VPK program.
- **Early Learning Resources for Families Disk:** The Office of Early Learning created and distributed a disk that contained early learning resources for families to use for increasing families' knowledge and understanding of quality programs for children. These resources support the administrative efficiencies as coalitions are able to post them on their websites for parents to review, download or print. Coalitions are under no obligation to re-print these resources. The items distributed include a Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs, VPK Parent Handbook, and Family Guide for Selecting Early Learning Programs. The resources are also posted on the OEL website and are translated into Spanish.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- OGC staff assisted law enforcement officials with questions regarding possible alien labor visa fraud.

Office of General Services

- General Services currently has the following items out for bid:
 - 09-ITN-004-MG (reissue), "UI Benefits Debit Card Services"
 - 09-ITN-005-MG, "UC Call Center Services"
 - 09-ITN-001-MG, "ELIS System Design, Development and Implementation"

Workforce Services

- Program staff accomplished the following as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:
 - Attended a meeting with the Department of Children and Families to discuss the work impact and definitions under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) provisions of the Act.
 - Clarification was received from the United States Department of Agriculture clarification on using Pledge State funds under the Act. The information will be presented to the FSET workgroup to explore the service implementation options for the State's FSET program.

Labor Market Statistics

- In March, the Labor Market statistics Center:
 - Produced a detailed industry employment time-series at the 3-digit industry level (1990-2007) by county and statewide for the Florida State University Healthy Communities Program.
 - Updated the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) Regional Targeted Occupations List web application with the 2009-10 preliminary targeted occupations lists for the regional workforce boards to review.
 - Completed Areas of Substantial Unemployment (ASU) data by workforce region for substate allocations.
 - Produced special reports on unemployment and job losses on fishermen and related seafood industry workers by county for the Florida Department of Agriculture.
 - Provided a commuting and demographic analysis on Columbia County for Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI).
 - Developed estimates of impacts of stimulus funds on workforce and education programs and estimated costs for stimulus assignments.
 - Prepared an analysis and presentation on labor market conditions and a report on Bachelors Degree occupations at the Workforce Estimating Conference held on February 26, 2009.
 - Provided demographic, income and wage data on rural counties for a workforce consultant.
 - Prepared a bill analysis on House Bill 1399 relating to employment discrimination of women.
 - Provided several reports in special formats of newly released data to various data users.
 - Met with Department of Education to discuss green jobs surveys and green jobs studies related to stimulus.
 - Prepared a write-up on Florida's High Tech Industry for Workforce Florida, Inc.
 - Provided density of population, statistical data, career publications and Census information to local school districts, community colleges, workforce boards, other state agencies and the general public.
 - Met with the Governor's Task Force on Biotech Competitiveness and the Governor's Census 2010 Complete Count Committee to provide assistance from workforce development.

4. Enhancing accountability and integrity

Office of Early Learning (OEL)

- The Data Quality unit worked with EDR to complete the VPK estimating conference. The VPK Estimating Conference continues to improve its methodology to better project the number of four-year-olds likely to participate in the VPK program.

Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

- OGC staff responded to 60 public records requests; filed Notices of Dismissal in 12 small claims cases regarding UC overpayment, and filed five Motions for Protective Orders in response to subpoenas for Agency records. Staff also provided analysis on a number of legislative bills, reviewed three personnel actions, four Civil Rights matters and numerous contracts.
- OGC staff reviewed and helped facilitate the signing of an agreement with USDOL that permits the Agency to pay an additional \$25 weekly to UC claimants and drafted legislative proposals to pay extended UC benefits and for dealing with UC trust fund solvency.
- OGC staff assisted Office of Early Learning (OEL) staff with drafting and publishing notice of a number of proposed rules. They reviewed numerous Early Learning Coalition (ELC) monitoring reports regarding eligibility and performance, and created a checklist to assist in petitions for rule variance and waiver requests submitted by ELCs.
- Responses were provided to questions regarding:
 - Use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to pay for child care in certain situations;
 - Registration of coalitions as fundraising organizations;
 - Whether charter schools may be treated as private providers for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services;
 - Sunshine law exemptions for local ELC records;
 - Disposal of property.
- OGC staff assisted Workforce Services staff in dealing with questions related to the following issues:
 - Agency application of federal information technology requirements;
 - Waiver of federal workforce requirements in support of stimulus implementation;
 - Process for designation of local workforce investment areas;
 - Options regarding worker's compensation for youth participating in workforce programs;
 - Marketing request regarding the SafeLink Wireless Community Outreach Program;
 - Contracts with community colleges regarding the Displaced Homemaker Program;
 - Modification of the Agency's grant application supporting the Food Stamp and Employment Training Program;
 - Resolution of disallowed costs by a Regional Workforce Board (RWB);

- Agency contract in support of the migrant and seasonal farm worker program.
- OGC staff assisted in drafting revision to proposed legislation related to Public Employee Organizations (PEOs), and provided guidance on several agency purchasing activities including:
 - Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) requirements;
 - Revisions to Agency core contracts;
 - Release of information on vendors who submit notices of intent to respond to ITNs.

Office of General Services

- Human Resources continues to conduct Plain Language training. (28 participants)
- Human Resources conducted an "Improving your Presentation Skills" workshop. (42 participants)
- Human Resources reviewed and submitted final edits to the Succession planning "Whitepaper."

Workforce Services

- Federal law requires monitoring of all statewide Regional Workforce Boards. Two on-site programmatic monitoring reviews and four special project reviews were conducted and or planned during March. In addition, two reports were released during this same time period. The reviews are conducted to ensure the Regional Workforce Boards' and other service providers' compliance with the workforce programs' respective laws, regulations, state plans and contract and/or agreement terms. Technical assistance on program practices and processes continued to be provided during the on-site reviews.

Labor Market Statistics

- Labor Market Statistics met with the Florida Association of Professional Employer Organizations and the Florida House and Senate on legislation related to reporting of employment by Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs).

Office of the Inspector General (OIG)

- The OIG opened seven (7) new projects that included one inquiry, three (3) internal referrals, three referrals to other agencies and one audit project.
- **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:**
 - The Inspector General participated in three meetings during the month concerning ARRA planning and implementation. The meetings were with groups as follows: (1) State Agency Inspectors General; (2) the Federal General Accountability Office (GAO) and (3) an internal Agency workgroup. These meetings addressed oversight and accountability requirements related to the ARRA. In addition to the meetings above, a staff meeting was dedicated specifically to the ARRA.

- **Investigations/Inquiries Reports:**

- OIG completed one investigation and issued an associated report;
- OIG continued work on a whistleblower investigation;
- OIG completed an investigative inquiry on a complaint and issued a report;
- OIG staff reviewed complaints referred by the Chief Inspector General's Office in accordance with the Whistle-blower's Act and made recommendations.
- OIG staff continued work to develop written directives for standards required for statewide accreditation.
- OIG called a meeting with the Office of Early Learning to discuss several opened projects.

- **Internal Audit Projects:**

- Coordinated the entrance conference with the Auditor General in connection with the Federal Awards Audit for the period 7/1/08 to 6/30/09.
- Issued the Internal Audit of the Agency's Purchasing Card Program.
- Prepared monthly reports of Tracked Audit Findings, Potential Audit Liability, and External Reviews and Audits.
- Issued 23 Management Decisions (OIG written reviews of audit reports submitted by independent certified public accountants) for sixteen Early Learning Coalitions and seven Regional Workforce Boards;

- **Other Activities:**

- The Audit Unit participated in 17 hours of Continuing Professional Education in the field of accounting and auditing (these hours were obtained from one training session, three audio conferences and attendance at the Association of Government Accountant's monthly meeting).

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