



**Charlie Crist**  
Governor  
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Director

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## **Governor's Budget Affirms Commitment to Workforce and Early Learning**

*~Priorities include strengthening early learning, enhancing workforce skills and supporting military families~*

**TALLAHASSEE** – Governor Charlie Crist and Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp today unveiled their budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2008-09, which will continue to support the development of world class talent in Florida through early learning programs and workforce services.

"The Governor is truly committed to ensuring Florida's continued success in the global marketplace, as evidenced by today's budget recommendations," said Monesia T. Brown, Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation. "With this investment in our state's early learning and workforce initiatives, we will make great strides in the development of world-class talent, which is vital to Florida's economy."

The Governor's budget for Fiscal Year 2008-09 includes:

**Ensuring educational success of Florida's children by providing successful early learning programs** - Florida's groundbreaking Voluntary Prekindergarten program has surpassed last year's total enrollment in the first six months of this school year. Governor Crist is proposing funding to continue the Voluntary Prekindergarten program, which has already prepared more than 200,000 children for kindergarten in the first two years. Governor Crist also recommends restoring budget authority of \$47.9 million to continue Florida's School Readiness program, funding quality education for eligible children in need of early learning services.

Governor Crist recommends \$3 million of additional funding for the development of the Early Learning Information System (ELIS), a Web-based system for storing and accessing information about early learning programs. The system will provide child care providers and parents with program and outcome information that will be meaningful to the delivery of quality educational services for Florida's youngest children.

### **Keeping Florida's workforce competitive; \$2 million to upgrade skills -**

Governor Crist recommends additional funding for the Quick Response Training Program, which provides grant funding for customized training for new or expanding businesses. Through this employer-driven program, Florida is able to effectively retain and attract businesses creating new high-quality jobs.

#### **Agency for Workforce Innovation**

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Governor Crist recommends \$2 million of continued funding for the Banner Centers program. This program focuses on creating and providing up-to-date training for workers in industries that are critical to sustaining and growing Florida's diverse economy. Most centers are based at Florida community colleges or universities. They engage educational institutions, businesses and workforce and economic development partners, among others, to provide a focal point for industry-specific skills training. In addition, the Banner Centers serve as clearinghouses for companies in need of training, create relevant and rigorous new curricula for entry-level and advanced workers who need to upgrade their skills, and ensure training and education meet industry standards.

**Strengthening Florida's military families; \$700,000 to continue workforce services to military families** - Understanding the importance of assisting those who serve our country and their families, Governor Crist recommends continued funding for the Military Family Employment Advocacy Program. This program provides workforce services such as employment counseling, job search and placement assistance, information on educational and training programs and referral to supportive services to military spouses and families.