

STRENGTHENING YOUTH PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

OVERVIEW

Florida's Strengthening Youth Partnership (SYP) initiative focuses attention on *ensuring that every young person in Florida is ready and able to pursue a meaningful job path upon exiting secondary education*. Today's youth are our future workers. Ensuring they are prepared to enter the labor market upon completion of education and training, so they can transition to independent living, is a critical task that must be a high priority if economic prosperity is to be realized for them and *sustained* for our state and nation.

The initiative was designed to strengthen youth partnerships by organizing a state effort for sustained dialogue to improve programs, services and outcomes for youth by thinking long-term, integrating complementary services, identifying duplicative efforts, gaps in services, and resource alignment. This interagency collaboration currently includes representatives of the following agencies and programs:

Workforce Florida, Inc.: Youth Development Council
Agency for Workforce Innovation
Regional Workforce Boards
Governor's Council of Indian Affairs
The Able Trust (High School/High Tech)
Department of Children and Families: Family Safety
Associated Industries of Florida

Department of Education: Bureau of Family and Community Outreach; Division of Vocational Rehab; Division of Workforce Education
Department of Juvenile Justice: Educational Programs, Residential Programs
Department of Community Affairs
Department of Health: Child & Adolescent Health
Volunteer Florida

What does the SYP intend to do?

- Educate state and local agency staff about business expectations, the critical importance of youth acquiring occupational skills in the current economy, and the available programs and resources to develop Florida's future workforce;
- Support a state organizational structure that will use collaborative interagency planning, resource alignment, implementation and outcome evaluation for the purpose of more effectively preparing youth for employment and the transition to adulthood;
- Clearly define or redefine each agency's role to contribute the most to value-added services so that public funds are invested wisely and not duplicated;
- Support a state policy framework for assuring the most at-risk youth become engaged in activities that will enhance personal and community economic development;
- Untangle agency policies that work at cross-purposes;
- Develop action-oriented approaches that will produce tangible results; and
- Accrue more federal funds for the state through joint efforts.

What has SYP achieved thus far?

- **CHOICES Career Academy Demonstration Projects** in 16 school districts were funded with statewide Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds with a 100 percent required local match from 2004 – 07. The recommendation for replications to support reforms in career education in Florida high schools was originally made by partners in the SYP initiative to increase opportunities for skills training and to improve graduation rates. **Impact: The continued expansion of CHOICE-modeled career academy programs in Florida high schools was codified in state law in 2007 with the Florida Career and Professional Education Act.**
- **Employ Florida Banner Center for Career Academies** – A two-year, \$1 million grant was awarded to the Okaloosa County School District in 2006 to create the Employ Florida Banner Center for Career Academies. **Impact: This Banner Center is charged with providing**

technical assistance to other districts seeking to launch career and professional academies and creating statewide standards for career/vocational education.

- **Partnership and Data Sharing Agreements** executed between state partners.
- **Project Connect** served 292 juvenile offenders, the most at-risk population of youth. Held state contractors/partners meeting to identify best practices, barriers and recommended policy changes. **Impact: With \$641,427 in funding from Workforce Florida, four Regional Workforce Boards serving 11 counties created local intervention programs aimed at reducing recidivism of youthful offenders by providing job-skill training, community service and transition assistance once they returned home. A total of 292 offenders were enrolled with positive results — a recidivism rate of 14% compared to the 39% state average for youthful offenders.**
- **Florida High School/High Tech (HS/HT)**, a transition program for students with disabilities, is under the leadership of The Able Trust and has developed a collaboration of the Florida Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, State and Regional Workforce and the Department of Juvenile Justice. During the 2006-2007 school years, 1,000 high school students with disabilities were enrolled. **Florida was one of the first two states to begin HS/HT programs in DJJ residential facilities as a result of statewide SYP meetings.**
- **A two year statewide pilot project to develop a shared services/case management model between regions for juvenile offenders and youth in foster care started in July 2007** to increase levels of service and performance to these populations as well as the development of a transfer and shared services model that could be used with other at-risk populations.
- **Cross Pollination** on various youth councils/initiatives, i.e. Partners in Transition, Independent Living Council, Career and Education Task Force Study, Career Education Committee for DJJ, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Homeless Coalition, Florida Energy Workforce Consortium, Florida Blueprint Commission for Juvenile Justice, etc.
- **Multi-agency and local coordination** to apply for U.S. Department of Labor grants to prepare youthful offenders to enter high-growth and high-demand industries as well as grants to serve youth aging out of foster care. Proposals not funded.
- **A cross-agency “train the trainer” workshop was held July 19-20.** Training included Youth @Work: Talking Safety curriculum, Florida Works, an Internet-based career building program (available at www.floridaworks.org), and Florida CHOICES, which can be used to assess, explore and plan for various careers (www.Florida.access.bridges.com).
- The **Federal Shared Youth Vision** calling for states to create a collaborative approach for preparing the most at-risk and neediest youth for jobs in a global economy was issued in 2005. The partners elected to respond to a competitive proposal to become one of 16 pilot states to advance the Vision through the Strengthen Youth Partnership initiative, which had already gained momentum with state partners. **Impact: Florida was chosen as one of 16 states to participate in the Advanced Youth Forums and to receive funding for two pilot sites in Florida to replicate the Strategic Youth Vision with targeted services for at-risk youth. The pilot in Charlotte County has set up an Offender Re-entry Board to improve educational and employment outcomes for offenders and decrease the recidivism rate. Through the pilot, a family service guide to services has been created and forums have been held to help families learn family-friendly coping behaviors. The First Coast Workforce Development Board (Jacksonville and surrounding counties) conducted a community assessment and action plan for serving youth with special needs with processes being documented to create**

a model for replication in any community. The information is at: http://www.workforceleadership.net/project/shared_youth_vision .

- **Workforce Florida’s Board has invested Workforce Investment Act (WIA) state set aside funding to support the Vision:** State set aside funding for PY05-06, PY06-07 and PY07-08, the *Florida BEST: Business Employment Solutions and Training* initiative, has allowed regions to identify gaps in needed local services and implement creative projects that fill those gaps. **Impact: \$14.5 million trained adults and youth in fields such as advanced manufacturing, health-care technology and construction.**
- **Workforce Florida’s Board has invested Workforce Investment Act (WIA) state set aside funding to support** A planning grant to “prime the pump” for small regions to quickly develop summer youth programs in anticipation of the Economic Stimulus package. The total cost of this initiative is 150K. A 15K allocation will be distributed to the ten smallest regional workforce boards, who as of February 6th 2009 have expended over 60% of their WIA Youth funding. These regions are: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 19. These funds will enable the regional workforce boards to better prepare a summer youth program which should allow more youth to be served and allow better services to be given to those youth who are served.
- **Workforce Florida’s Board has invested Workforce Investment Act (WIA) state set aside funding to support** a demonstration grant targeting those youth involved in DJJ and/or Foster Care with special emphasis on training, literacy and numeracy grade level gains and the development of a transition system to support a transition plan for the engaged or transitioning youth.
- **Forums that Focused on a Shared Youth Vision and Interagency Collaboration**
 - **Best Practices** serving the most at-risk youth presented at Statewide Strengthening Youth Partnerships meeting in July 2004. Over 75 participants from multiple agencies.
 - **Youth Technical Assistance Workshop** for youth workforce professionals held July 19-20, 2005. Over 80 participants from multiple agencies.
 - **CHOICES replications showcased** at the third statewide youth meeting June 14-16, 2006, which focused on “Winning the Global Competition.”
 - **A Statewide Cross-agency Youth Summit** was held in conjunction with the annual Workforce Summit in January 2007 for front-line workforce professionals focused on best practices for employment of the most at-risk populations and community collaboration.
 - **Statewide meeting was held March 17-18, 2008**, to showcase Florida’s two **Shared Youth Vision Pilots** and meet with 41 Independent Living Coordinators to hear information from speakers requested by state partners. The March 17th meeting drew 50 participants, while 95 people took part in the March 18th meeting representing myriad state agencies and organizations.
 - **New Orleans Workforce Innovations Conference July 2008** brought together local, state and national-level strategic workforce investment partners to learn from successes and cultivate the talent development solutions needed in today's global economy. Co-hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration (ETA) and the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), Workforce Innovations has become ETA's flagship event for bringing together leaders in workforce development and key

partners in business, education, economic development, community-based organizations and philanthropy.

- **Statewide meeting was held September 26, 2008** With over thirty partners present the following items were discussed: An update on the Statewide Shared Case Management Pilot Project; a report on DJJ activities to develop local Shared Youth Vision initiatives; a summary of the Workforce Innovations Conference; a review of the SYP web site construction; a briefing on the Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet; and several agency updates.
- **Statewide meeting was held February 23, 2009 at the Agency for Workforce Innovation in Tallahassee.** With over thirty partners present the following items were discussed: Agency Updates; review of the SYP website; High School/High Tech Overview (National Grant); Operation Full Employment – DCF; USDOL Peer to Peer Initiative; Briefing on Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet; and an Update on the Statewide Shared Case Management Pilot Project—review of data/incentives.
- **USDOL Shared Youth Vision Peer-to-Peer Regional Forum was held on April 27-28, 2009 in SanDestin, Fl,** teams from Shared Youth Vision (SYV) states will convene in the locations identified above to share successes, lessons and future plans. The Peer to Peer Regional Forum will also gave state teams an opportunity to delve deeper into statewide action planning — refining and modifying existing plans — “roll up their sleeves” and utilize proven tools and strategic planning concepts to solidify long-term local investment approaches and create a strategic action plan to be used in their state work. Florida had representation from the Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children and Families, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Workforce Florida, and representatives from The Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs, Inc.
- The next SYP meeting was held on July 20th, 2009.

The Strengthening Youth Partnership website is being developed to serve as a portal and central location to access all of the youth resources available through Florida's government agencies and departments. Housed on the Agency for Workforce Innovation's website, the site will focus heavily on educating youth about their workforce options while providing links to other Youth Partnership resources. **The site was launched in the spring of 2009.**