

oppaga

Status Report



March 2001

Report No. 01-19

Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program Appears to Be Improving Its Performance

at a glance

- The program indicates it has exceeded its statutory outcome goals for graduation, employment, and earnings. However, program staff do not calculate employment rates and earnings consistent with statutory goals.
- Operating currently in 34 schools, the program will need to substantially expand its operations over the next year to meet its upcoming goal of operating in 300 schools in the 2001-02 school year.
- The program needs to improve the performance and training of its job specialists who are not performing all of the required tasks to promote and market the program to local businesses.
- The program's board of directors should become more active in guiding the program, but it has waited for the new Commissioner of Education to take office before moving forward on several initiatives.

Purpose

Section 446.609(13)(a), *Florida Statutes*, requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to review the annual report submitted by Jobs for America's Graduates, regarding the activities of the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program. Our review is to analyze reported program results and make any recommendations regarding the expansion, curtailment, modification, or continuation of the program.

Background

The Legislature created the Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program in 1998 to help high-risk students make the transition from school to work. The program targets high school seniors and provides services to help these students graduate and to either continue their education or find meaningful employment within nine months of their graduation. Florida's program is part of a 20-year nationwide initiative coordinated by the Jobs for America's Graduates, Inc., based in Arlington, VA. This organization is currently working with high school seniors in 27 states in the United States.

The program is governed by the Florida Endowment Foundation, which acts as a direct support organization for the program. The foundation's board has 15 members representing the public and private sectors. The board hires a management team to run the day-to-day program operations and is also charged with encouraging public and private support and contributions to the program.

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The Jobs for Florida's Graduates management team is responsible for all of the program's day-to-day activities, including the training and supervision of staff that work in participating high schools, collecting data, and conducting site visits to the participating high schools.

Job specialists serve as mentors. The program operates by identifying at-risk twelfth-grade students and providing a variety of job counseling and training services to them. These students are selected by school managers and by "job specialists" employed by the program. These job specialists are hired to work with 35-45 students in each participating high school.

The job specialists are hired by school managers but are to functionally report to the program's management team. The job specialists meet regularly with students to help them obtain specific job competencies. Much of this contact with students occurs in one-to-one mentoring sessions. However, the job specialists also interact with students after classroom hours, particularly during instructional meetings of the student-run Career Association, which comprises all students selected to the program. Job specialists are also expected to meet periodically with students and their parents.

The job specialists are to market the program to prospective employers and work to place students in quality jobs. According to Florida statute, job specialists have a nine-month period after the date of the students' anticipated high school graduation to conduct follow-up activities that help the students get employed, stay employed and advance in their jobs, or continue their education beyond high school while establishing a positive part-time work record. The Jobs for America's Graduates policy calls for the provision of such services for students for 12 months after their classes graduate, and that is the basis upon which they have reported their results.

The Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program was established for an initial five-year period, starting in school year 1998-99. The program was required to operate in at least 25 high schools (and no more than 50) in its first year of operation, with the eventual goal of operating in at least 300 high school sites by the end of the 2001-02 school year. Participating schools are

selected by the foundation board and must enter into an agreement with the board that details the responsibilities of each party and the process and outcome goals for the program. The selected schools must be demographically and geographically representative of the state's population.

Legislative expectations increase during program's tenure. The Legislature established specific outcome goals for the program. Standards have been established for graduation rates, employment status, and earnings, with expectations increasing over the initial five years. For example, 82% of Jobs for Florida's Graduates first year participants were expected to graduate or earn their General Equivalency Diploma (GED). This goal increased to 85% during the second year and to 90% during subsequent years.

The Legislature appropriated \$1 million in start-up funding to the initial eight school sites in the program during Fiscal Year 1998-99, half of which was placed into an investment account and the other half released to the foundation board. An additional \$836,000 was funded through federal school-to-work monies via the Florida Department of Education. The Legislature appropriated \$3 million for Fiscal Year 2000-01. Although the program encourages the development of private funding, none was obtained during the first two years of the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program.

First year evaluation. OPPAGA published a review of the program's first year of operation in January 2000 that detailed its start-up problems.¹ The program suffered a leadership vacuum because its board of directors was inactive and did not meet for nearly a year. The board did not hire a program management team until June 1999, which necessitated that Department of Education staff assume interim program management responsibilities. As a result, the job specialists hired by the school districts to administer the program in high schools received little training or supervision during the first year.

¹ *Status Report: Jobs for Florida's Graduates needs to Correct Start-Up Problems to Meet Statutory Goals*, [Report No. 99-25](#), January 2000.

However, the board had taken steps to correct these problems and improve program management. It had defined its responsibilities and hired an experienced management team to administer the Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program on a day-to-day basis.

The program was not initially meeting its statutory performance goals with respect to graduation and employment rates for the participating students. However, the program did meet those goals within its follow-up period. During the program's first year the program's national accreditation team gave the Florida program a probationary accreditation.

Performance

Complete results of the program's second year of operation, Fiscal Year 1999-2000, will not be available until after June 30, 2001. Although the enacting legislation denotes March 31 of the year following the end of the academic year in which the participants' respective high school classes graduate as the performance goal deadline, the program uses the June 30 date when reporting its performance as it is the national organization's policy to use a 12-month follow-up period. According to the Jobs for America's graduates national program office the Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program has improved its operations and was awarded "Standard Accreditation" status by the national program in 2000.

Graduation/job placement/earnings goals should be met; school openings and enrollment goals look questionable

The Jobs for Florida's Graduates' annual report showed that as of October 2000 the program was within 7% of its graduation rate goal of 85% and was exceeding its second year goal for job placements.² However, the program's goals for the number of schools participating and students enrolled appear unlikely to be attained.

Graduation Rate. The program met its first year graduation rate for participating students and appears to be on track to meet its goal for its second year of operation. Florida law required that at least 82% of the program's first year

students must graduate or complete GED requirements within nine months (by March 31) of the graduation date of their respective high school classes. This goal increases to 85% for the 1999-2000 school year and to 90% for subsequent years.

As shown in Exhibit 1, 85.8% of the program's first-year students met graduation requirements by June 30, 2000, and 78.6% of the second-year students had met these requirements as of October 2000. As these students have until March 31, 2001, to meet graduation requirements, it is likely that this goal will be met for the program's second year as well. The program does report information on the number of students who graduated by March 31, the statutorily required reporting time frame.

Employment. According to figures reported by Jobs for Florida's Graduates, the program met its first year performance goal for full-time job placements and average wages by June 30, 2000. As of October 2000, Jobs for Florida's Graduates reported that 90.49% of the students who participated during the 1999-2000 school year were placed in full-time jobs, in the military, or enrolled in postsecondary education. As shown in Exhibit 1, this exceeded the statutory goal that between 75% and 78% of participants be placed (this goal increases to 80% for subsequent years).

However, the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program does not calculate its employment rates consistent with Florida statutes. The employment figures reported by Jobs for Florida's Graduates are calculated according to U.S. Department of Labor methodology. This methodology provides information on only those graduates who have positive outcomes and the percentage of those graduates who are employed full-time or are enrolled in school. The calculation does not include students who graduated but were not employed on a full-time basis or enrolled in school, or any students who participated in the program but did not graduate regardless of whether they were employed full-time or not. In addition, as of September 30, 2000, one-third of program participants were not included in the calculation because Jobs for Florida's Graduates did not have follow-up information on them at that time. There were six months remaining in the follow-up phase at this point.

² This performance data is based on a 12-month follow up cycle rather than the 9 months required by statute.

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Exhibit 1

Based on the Program's Calculation Method, Graduation and Employment Rates Exceeded Goals in the First Year and Are Poised to Do So in the Second Year ¹

Graduation Rate			
Statutory Mandate	Year 1 At least 82% graduated or completed GED	Year 2 At least 85% graduated or completed GED	Years 3-5 At least 90% graduated or completed GED
Program results (as of November 1, 2000)	85.8%	78.6%	
Employment/Enrollment Rate			
Statutory Mandate	Year 1 70-75% employed 40 hours per week, in the military, or enrolled in postsecondary institution	Year 2 75-78% Employed 40 hours per week, in the military, or enrolled in postsecondary institution	Years 3-5 80% Employed 40 hours per week, in the military, or enrolled in postsecondary institution
Program results (as of November 1, 2000)	92.7%	90.5%	
Programs in Operation			
	Year 1 No fewer than 25 or more than 50 school sites		Year 4 (2001-02) At least 300 schools at
Program results	24 high schools	34 high schools (as of January 2001)	

¹ Year 1 results calculated on the basis of a 12-month follow-up period.

Source: Accreditation Report for Jobs for Florida's Graduates, November 1, 2000.

Florida statutes call for the assessment of "participants" who are employed full-time, not graduates only. If all participants, including non-graduates, are included, the percentage employed full-time or enrolled in postsecondary education is 55.5% (Exhibit 2). When students who had not been contacted were removed from the calculation, 77.6% of all participants in the program are employed on a full-time basis. The latter result is within the range of statutory expectations, but the results for one third of program participants is unknown.

Exhibit 2

Percentage of Students Employed/Enrolled Drops When All Graduates and Non-Graduates Are Included

	Percentage of Students Employed Full-Time or Enrolled in Postsecondary Education	
	Graduates Only	All Participants
All Students	58.5% (n=927)	55.5% (n=1,186)
Students who were contacted	85.5% (n=634)	77.6% (n=801)

Source: Accreditation Report for Jobs for Florida's Graduates, November 1, 2000

The Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research has begun a longitudinal study of the program for the purpose of comparing program participants to a representative control group with similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. As shown in Exhibit 3, the office's first report, which analyzed the program graduates in 1999, found that a higher percentage of the program's were employed, had full-time jobs, and earned more money than the control group. In future years, the comparison between groups in this report provides the potential to determine the value-added with respect to earnings and employment from participation in the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program.

Earnings. The average wage earned by Florida's 1999-2000 program graduates was \$7.01 for the June 30, 2000, reporting timeframe. While the average wage of program graduates nationwide will not be available until June 30, 2001, the October 2000 Florida average wage was higher than the \$6.98 average wage for the previous year's graduates, which in turn exceeded the national average \$6.58. As is the case for the employment rate goal, earnings are calculated by the program for graduates only, while the

statute specifies earnings by “participants” whether they graduate or not. Thus it is not clear whether the program will meet or exceed its statutory performance goals with respect to the average wages earned by the class of 2000 participants.

**Exhibit 3
Program Participants Were More Likely to Be Employed and Receive Higher Earnings**

	Control Group	Program Class of 1999
Found employed	58%	68%
Average earnings – all	\$2,156	\$2,556
Estimated full-time	34%	40%
Average full-time earnings	\$3,879	\$4,265
Wages between \$7.50 and \$8.99	7%	8%
Wages greater than \$9.00	6%	11%

Source: Office of Economic and Demographic Research Year 1 Report of the Longitudinal Study of the Jobs for Florida’s Graduates Program.

Enrollment/School Openings. The program was operated in 24 high schools in its first year of operation, but did not meet its goal of operating in 25 high schools in Fiscal Year 1998-99. As of October 2000 the program is operating in 34 high schools. There is no 2000-01 statutory goal for participating schools, but the program is required to operate in 300 high schools by the end of the 2001-02 school year. With 34 high schools in January 2001, the program will need to substantially expand its operations over the next year to meet its upcoming goal.

As noted, the statutory performance goals are set for high schools opened. Jobs for America’s Graduates uses the terms “sites” and “schools” interchangeably in reports of performance. The presence of a job specialist represents one site. There may be multiple job specialists in some high schools, meaning that the same high school would contain more than one site. Currently, the Florida program has 56 sites in operation in the 34 high schools with programs.

The slow progress in expanding the program into new schools can be traced to the relatively late start by the management team in the program’s first year and the need for the management team to pay attention to existing

programs. The program has instituted a leadership council, which is intended to groom current job supervisors to help open programs in new schools. However, it appears unlikely that the program will be able to establish programs in 244 new schools over the next 18 months in order to reach the statutory goal.

The program’s October 2000 annual report shows that there are 1,119 students enrolled in the program. That represents an average of 22 students per program, when the goal is 35-45 students per program. However, the annual report has a deadline that precludes including new students who enrolled in the current school year. When the new students are included the program is serving 1,688 students. This enrollment represents 50 students per high school, or 30 students per job specialist or site. This is just short of the 35-45 students per program goal.

Jobs for Florida’s Graduates falls short on internal core competency attainment

While not a statutory performance goal, the Jobs for America’s Graduates program maintains an internal goal that program participants achieve 30 required core competencies.³ The Florida program has added seven additional competencies, resulting in a total of 37 core competencies that its participants are expected to achieve. The annual report noted that a small number of program participants were attaining all 37 required core competencies, and that the average number of core competencies attained by the class of 2000 was 19.3. However, this number was lowered because many programs opened in mid-year; students enrolled in programs that were open for the full 1999-2000 school year attained an average of 33 core competencies.

³The students are to gain 37 core competencies that were developed in cooperation with the private sector. These competencies include such skills as selecting an immediate job goal, constructing a resume and conducting a job search, demonstrating time management, delivering presentations to a group, and demonstrating the ability to assume responsibility for actions and decisions.

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The board of directors should be more proactive but waited for the new Commissioner of Education before moving forward

While the program's board of directors has become more active since our prior review, it continues to be slow in addressing some issues. The board has organized and meets on a quarterly schedule. However, board members have limited experience with the program other than the quarterly meetings, and the board also has not yet created committees to deal with specific activities such as finance, personnel, and executive operations. The board did not accept an action plan resulting from the 1999 accreditation review until September 22, 2000. Finally, although permitted by law, the board has not raised any outside funding during the program's first two years.

The board's composition does not meet statutory requirements. By statute, the board is to comprise 15 members, of whom 9 are to hold positions in the private sector. Currently only 5 members are from the private sector. The board deferred action pending the transition to the new Commissioner of Education, who automatically became a board member.

Job specialists' not performing all required duties

The program's annual report identified several areas where the job specialists are not performing several required tasks—recruiting and selecting participating students, assessing student skills and aptitudes, developing employer marketing and job development plans, and documenting employer marketing activities.

Student selection and assessment. The annual report indicates that the job specialists are not making full use of the in-school advisory committee in the recruitment and selection of appropriate students. This advisory committee, comprising representatives from a school's administration, counseling function, basic skills faculty and vocational faculty, should identify and recommend at-risk senior students to the job specialist.

The annual report asserts that there is no evidence that job specialists have made initial assessments of student aptitudes, interests or

basic skills upon their entry in to the program. In particular, the job specialists have not made full use of the program's pre- and post-tests to assess student progress. These tests can help job specialists in developing individual plans of action for each student, as well as judge initial and year-end competency attainment. The pre-test is intended to serve as a baseline measure, with the post-test reflecting students' skill developments.

Employer marketing and development activities. The annual report also noted that there were few documented instances of job specialists performing their required employer marketing and job development services. These activities involve developing and maintaining relationships with current and potential employers of program graduates.

In addition, some of the participating schools did not have Employer Marketing and Job Development plans, as called for in the program model. These plans detail the steps that will be taken to reach local businesses and potential employers and are important to establishing good working relationships with prospective employers.

The annual report notes that in some cases job specialists have not performed such tasks. In some cases, job specialists who are new to the job may not realize the importance of such activities, or be reluctant to leave their campuses. In other instances the job specialists may be performing these activities but not documenting them properly.

Job specialists' employment status with school districts. The enacting legislation (s. 446.609(8)(j), *Florida Statutes*) called for the job specialists to be employed by Jobs for Florida Graduates, and not by the state. Currently job specialists are employees of the school district in which their high school is located, and are functionally accountable to the program management team. Program staff contend that having the job specialists employed by the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program would increase control over job specialists' activities and have positive results for students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program has improved its operations and was awarded "Standard Accreditation" status by the national program in 2000. The program appears likely to meet or exceed its statutory performance goal with respect to graduation rate. However, it is less certain that the program will meet its performance goals with respect to employment and earnings when all participants are included in the calculation. In addition, the program will need to significantly expand its operations over the next year to meet the statutory goal to operate in 300 schools at the end of the 2001-02 school year; it currently operates in only 34 high schools.

Based upon the program's improved performance and general attainment of its statutory goals, we recommend that the Legislature continue the program, but future reports of program performance need to be consistent with the established statutory goals.

We recommend that Jobs for Florida's Graduates report its performance consistent with statutory performance goals.

- Calculations of the percentage of participants employed full-time or enrolled in postsecondary education employment status and average earnings should be based on the all participants not just those with positive outcomes.
- The Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program should report its performance data consistent with the statutory requirement. Although the national program allows 12 months to collect and report on program performance Florida statutes require that performance be reported as of March 31 (9 months).
- Program staff should report the number of high schools that operate the program consistent with statutory goals. Currently program staff report the number of program sites in operation as 56 and at times refers to them in performance reports as "schools"

although the program is currently operating in 34 high schools.

To resolve management weaknesses, we recommend the actions below be taken.

- We recommend that the board of directors take more of a proactive role in developing the program's overall vision and strategy. The board should review its membership to come into compliance with the statutory requirement that at least nine of its members hold positions in the private sector. The board should also take steps to increase its members' expertise in the program, including forming operating committees to more directly guide program activities and to encourage members to participate in program conferences and visit school sites.
- We recommend that the board examine the current statutory requirement that all job specialists must be program employees "to the maximum extent possible" rather than school district employees. In its examination, the board should consider the benefits and drawbacks of the requirement and whether it is feasible. The board should submit any needed changes to the policy to the Legislature for consideration during the 2001 session.
- We recommend that the management team provide greater training and technical assistance to job specialists. This training should focus on marketing the program with prospective employers, competency instruction, student selection and assessment, and the proper documentation of activities.

Agency Response

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.45(7)(d), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Commissioner of Education for his review and response.

The Commissioner's written response has been reproduced herein beginning on page 8.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CHARLIE CRIST
COMMISSIONER

March 12, 2001

Mr. John W. Turcotte, Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis
And Government Accountability
The Florida Legislature
111 West Madison Street
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Dear Mr. Turcotte:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the time and effort that was involved in reviewing the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program.

It is apparent from the comprehensive nature of the report that considerable effort was involved and we appreciate the thoroughness of the study.

We are enclosing a response to the recommendations that was prepared by the management team for Jobs for Florida's Graduates and the national organization, Jobs for America's Graduates. Due to the extensive knowledge of these groups regarding the Jobs for America's Graduates model, we believe that they are the most appropriate respondents.

Again, thank you for the thoroughness of the report and we look forward to working with you and your staff on other studies.

Sincerely,

/s/
Charlie Crist

CC:lcy
Enclosure

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ISSUES RAISED
IN THE
OPPAGA STATUS REPORT
FEBRUARY 2001
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

PREPARED BY

JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES

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MARCH 1, 2001

STRENGTHS

The OPPAGA STATUS REPORT presented findings, conclusions and recommendations that are representative of the high standards that are characteristic of a JAG accredited organization. Jobs for Florida's Graduates is appreciative of the OPPAGA'S staff presentation including:

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
1	<p>Purpose</p> <p>"...The program's board of directors should become more active in guiding the program, but has waited for the new Commissioner of Education to take office before moving forward on several initiatives."</p>	<p>Jobs for Florida's Graduates welcomes the annual review by OPPAGA and the annual accreditation review Jobs for America's Graduates.</p> <p>This statement is appreciated because it explains the reason why the board of directors has not been more active. And, it recognizes JFG has not gained the greatest value from the JFG Board until the new Commissioner of Education was elected. Considerable progress will be made in building a high performing organization with a more active and involved JFG Board of Directors. Several Board members have been personally active with the program over the past year. The management team is quite willing to work with the JFG Board of Directors and the new Commissioner in achieving the statutory goals of the legislation.</p>
2	<p>Column 1 provides an informative overview of the JAG Model.</p>	<p>The JAG Model is built upon an accountability system that is without comparison when fully implemented. JFG has been unable to fully implement the JAG Model and achieve the level of accountability because "job specialists are hired by school managers but are to functionally report to the program's management team." The Florida Legislature should allow for Specialists to be employed by Jobs for Florida's Graduates and assigned to schools as JFG employees where most cost and program effective.</p>
3	<p>"...and hired an experienced management team to administer the Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program on a day-to-day basis."</p> <p>"According (to) the Jobs for America's Graduates national program office the Jobs for Florida's Graduates Program has improved its operations and was awarded 'Standard Accreditation' status by the national program in 2000."</p> <p>"Graduation/job placement/placement/earnings goals should be met..."</p>	<p>The JFG management team consists of three seasoned professionals with prior JAG experience from three high performing state organizations--Maine, Arizona, and Illinois. The JFG Executive Director led the #1 statewide program in the JAG National Network for five years prior to serving as a National Senior Trainer until she accepted the Florida position.</p> <p>Jobs for Florida's Graduates earned Standard Accreditation based upon the national organization's annual review. It is important to note that Standard Accreditation is the highest level of recognition by the national organization. JFG earned its Standard Accreditation through an on-site review of its schools, interviews with local and state leaders, and an analytical review of the data captured by the electronic National Data Management System.</p> <p>It is highly recommended that the statute be updated to reflect the 12-month follow-up phase of the JAG Model. The OPPAGA STATUS REPORT suggests that JFG is not following the statute because it adheres to the requirements of the JAG Model that requires a 12-month follow-up and reporting period rather than the 9 months of follow-up in the statute.</p>

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
3	<p>"As of October 2000, Jobs for Florida's Graduates reported that 90.49% of the students who participated during the 1999-2000 school year were placed in full-time jobs, in the military, or enrolled in postsecondary education. As shown in Exhibit 1, this exceeded the statutory goal that between 75% and 78% of participants be placed (this goal increases to 80% for subsequent years).</p>	<p>The 90.49% rate is significantly above the national average for JAG affiliates and is representative of a high performing organization.</p>
5	<p>"Program participants were more likely to be employed and receive higher earnings."</p> <p>"The slow progress in expanding the program into new schools can be traced to the relatively late start by the management team in the program's first year and the need for the management team to pay attention to existing programs."</p> <p>"With 34 high schools in January 2001, the program will need to substantially expand its operations over the next year to achieve its upcoming goal."</p>	<p>Exhibit 3 demonstrates the value-add that JAG Model programs achieve when fully implemented by a dedicated and well-led staff. These achievements are directly related to the commitment, training, supervision, and performance of the JFG Specialists.</p> <p>The JFG management team has been most effective in overcoming the late start in the program's first year.</p> <p>A more active and involved Board of Directors plus an expansion of the existing management team would speed the implementation of the JAG Model in 300 high schools/sites.</p> <p>JFG established multiple sites in schools to respond to the extreme need for the JAG Model. Since a JFG Specialist is restricted to 35-45 participants in the in-school phase of the program, it is impossible to impact the overall graduation and employment rates in a large urban high school with a one program per school policy. Assuming adequate funding, the 300 school goal can still be met.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Florida Statutes be updated to require JFG to establish 300 programs across the state which have documented need for a school-to-career and dropout prevention program and are committed to the provisions of the JAG Model.</p>
6	<p>"The board of directors should be more proactive. . ."</p>	<p>The JFG management team (with support from JAG) is willing to implement a Board Member Development Program which will provide board members with the knowledge and experience required to be more proactive in leading the statewide organization. The development program will result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Board committee structure "to deal with specific activities such as finance, personnel, and executive operations." • A more proactive Board working in collaboration with the Commissioner of Education and the JFG Management Team. • A private-sector led Board of Directors.

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
6	"Job specialists' not performing all required duties."	The JFG Specialists would be more likely to fully implement the JAG Model including those duties noted in the 2000 ACCREDITATION REPORT if they were employed by Jobs for Florida's Graduates, Inc. based on the 20 year experience of JAG, Inc. The management team initiated a comprehensive Staff Development Program that has already responded to the findings of the 2000 ACCREDITATION REPORT.
7	"Program staff contend that having the job specialists employed by the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program would increase control over job specialists' activities and have positive results for students."	Jobs for Florida's Graduates will improve its performance and growth rate if Job Specialists are employed by the non-profit corporation rather than the local school district, again based on the 20 years of JAG, Inc. experience. The Florida Legislature should allow for Job Specialists to be employed by JFG, Inc. where most cost and program effective.
	"The Jobs for Florida's Graduates has improved its operations and was awarded Standard Accreditation status by the national program in 2000."	The JAG Accreditation Process is rigorous and 'standard accreditation' demonstrates JFG's commitment and effectiveness in implementing the JAG Model.
	"The program appears likely to meet or exceed its statutory performance goal with respect to graduation rate."	The most critical goal of a JAG Model program is to deliver services that will result in 90% of program participants to attain a high school diploma or a GED certificate. The name of the organization reinforces the importance of "graduation" in the 21-month intervention following the JAG Model.
	"Based upon the program's improved performance and general attainment of its statutory goals, we recommend that the Legislature continue the program..."	Jobs for Florida's Graduates has achieved remarkable success considering the early launch challenges of the statewide program. The success rates can be greatly increased if the Florida Legislature will update the Statutes to be consistent with the JAG Model. A failure to update the Statutes will cause future inconsistencies with the current statutory goals that are referenced in the OPPAGA STATUS REPORT.

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7	"To resolve management weaknesses, we recommend the following actions be taken:"	<p>The recommended actions focus on the JFG Board of Directors not the management team, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...take more of a proactive role in developing the program's overall vision and strategy." • "...at least nine of its members hold positions in the private sector." • "...should also take steps to increase its members' expertise in the program, ..." • "...forming operating committees to more directly guide program activities. . ." • "...to encourage members to participate in program conferences and visit school sites. This is occurring with several of the Board members." • "...examine the current statutory requirement that all job specialists must be program employees to the maximum extent possible rather than school district employees." • "... The Board should submit any needed changes to the policy of the Legislature for consideration during the 2001 session." This has been done in House Bill 313.
8	"We recommend that the management team provide greater training and technical assistance to job specialists. This training should focus on marketing the program with prospective employers, competency instruction, student selection and assessment, and the proper documentation of activities."	The management team implemented such training in response to the 2000 ACCREDITATION REPORT.

CONCERNS

Jobs for Florida's Graduates identified areas of concern in reviewing the OPPAGA STATUS REPORT. The concerns include:

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
1	Headline: "Jobs for Florida's Graduates Appears to be Improving its Performance"	Significant progress has been made since the current management team was employed to fully implement the JAG Model.
	"...However, program staff do not calculate employment rates and earnings consistent with statutory goals."	The statutes require Jobs for Florida's Graduates to implement the JAG Model which is quite specific as to what constitutes success in an accredited statewide program. Unfortunately, the statute (which were to be based upon the JAG Model) are in conflict with the JAG Model. The sponsors of the legislation have submitted new language that will correct the inconsistencies that were not identified when the legislation was first introduced and passed. (HB 313) This statement creates a negative impression of the program staff. JFG staff is using the 21-year JAG method for calculating employment rates and earnings. It is recommended that the Florida Legislation be consistent with the JAG Model so that JFG can be assessed using JAG's method of calculating its performance outcome/goals.
	"... The program needs to improve the performance and training of its job specialists who are not performing all the required tasks to promote and market the program to local businesses."	In 1999, Jobs for Florida's Graduates instigated the most comprehensive staff development initiative in the JAG National Network. (The JFG Executive Director was formerly the National Senior Trainer for Jobs for America's Graduates and full understands the JAG Model and the importance of a year-round staff development program.) While the program can improve the promotion and marketing of its program to local businesses, JFG has the added challenge of not employing JFG Specialists. Program staff should be given the authority and responsibility to hire, train, supervise and evaluate JFG Specialists. In doing so, there is no doubt that "performance" will improve significantly. Unless JFG Specialists work directly for JFG, Inc., performance improvement will likely be much more difficult to achieve.
2	"...Although the program encourages the development of private funding, none was obtained during the first two years of the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program."	The primary focus of the JFG management team is to fully implement the JAG Model and build a high performing statewide organization. The management team, consisting of three staff members, must devote its time and energy to programmatic not fundraising initiatives. It is hoped that a more active and involved Board of Directors can lead a statewide fundraising campaign that will provide JFG with additional resources to serve more young people.

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
3	<p>"The program was not initially meeting its statutory performance goals with respect to graduation and employment rates for the participating students. However, the program did meet those goals within its follow-up period."</p> <p>"Complete results of the program's second year of operation, Fiscal Year 1999-2000, will not be available until after June 30, 2001, Although the enacting legislation denotes March 31 of the year following the end of the academic year in which the participants' respective high school classes graduate as the performance goal deadline, the program uses June 30 date when reporting its performance as it is the national organization's policy to use a 12-month follow-up period."</p>	<p>Jobs for Florida's Graduates implemented the Senior Program Application of the JAG Model. The Senior Program is a 21-month intervention (consisting of the nine month senior year plus the 12-month follow-up phase). The purpose of the 12-month (not nine-month) follow-up period is to deliver services that are required when participants transition from school to the work place in an entry level quality job. It would be impossible for JFG to achieve the employment goals in the senior year alone since the JAG Model does not encourage job placement until after graduation. In the JAG Model, the emphasis is placed on academics, remediation, employability skills, and graduation not 'job placement'.</p> <p>The JAG Model requires that services be delivered to young people that do not graduate with their cohort. The 12-month follow-up period provides the program with sufficient time to work with nongraduates to complete requirements for a high school diploma (or a GED certificate) by the next spring graduation. All federal programs increased the follow-up period to mirror the JAG Model effective July 1 of 2000 and many states implemented that provision of the Workforce Investment Act earlier. The Florida statutes were written about the same time that JAG increased the follow-up period from 9 to 12 months.</p> <p>JFG is a highly accountable program attracting participants who are at risk of remaining in school, completing requirements for a high school diploma, or transitioning into the work place with or without a postsecondary education. JFG should be evaluated on its ability to achieve it goals in a 21-month period of time.</p>
		<p>The in-school and follow-up phases should be viewed as inseparable since the JAG Model requires data to be captured for all participants until the close of the 21st month of services and reporting requirements.</p> <p>No in-school programs are charged with such extraordinary service delivery requirements and performance outcomes.</p>
	<p>"Florida law required that at least 82% of the program's first year students must graduate or complete GED requirements within nine months (by March 31) of the graduation date of their respective high school classes."</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Florida Legislature update the statute to require twelve months of follow-up services not the outdated nine months of follow-up services. By using the 12-month phase, the Florida Legislature and OPPAGA can use national data to compare JFG's performance with the JAG National Network.</p> <p>If the services were limited to 9 months, JFG participants would receive less services than those provided by fully accredited JAG Model statewide organizations.</p>
	<p>"...However, the Jobs for Florida's Graduates program does not calculate its employment rates consistent with the Florida Statutes."</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Florida Legislature update the statute to compute employment rates consistent with the JAG Model and the Federal Workforce Investment Act. In doing so, JFG's performance can be compared to the performance of other state organizations.</p>

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
3	<p>" . . . This methodology provides information on only those graduates who have positive outcomes and the percentage of those graduates who are employed full-time or are enrolled in school. The calculation does not include students who graduated but were not employed on a full-time basis or enrolled in school, or any students who participated in the program but did not graduate."</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Florida Legislature update the statute to calculate program performance consistent with the JAG Model. In doing so, JFG's performance can be compared to the performance of other state organizations.</p> <p>It should be noted that the electronic National Data Management System is used to capture data and calculate 'rates' to document program performance in key performance areas. Those described in the Florida Statutes were due to a legislative drafting oversight which provisions were inconsistent with the JAG Model.</p> <p>The Florida Statute and the JAG Model should be in total alignment.</p>
4	<p>" . . . Florida Statutes call for the assessment of 'participants' who are employed full-time, not graduates only."</p>	<p>The JAG Model is focused first on 'graduation' then 'employment'. As a result, the electronic National Data Management System does track the participant and places participants in three categories in the follow-up period—graduate, non-graduate or deceased. For those that graduate, NDMS tracks services and performance outcomes with particular attention to destinations—employment (full-time or part-time), postsecondary enrollment (full-time or part-time), or full-time military. For non-graduates, the same data is tracked, however, JAG affiliates are not allowed to count job placements until the participant receives a high school diploma or completes requirements for a GED certificate. It is recommended that the Florida Statute be updated to include the national methodology for calculating performance rates for comparison purposes.</p>
5	<p>"...Thus it is not clear whether the program will meet or exceed its statutory performance goals with respect to the average wages earned by the Class of 2000 participants."</p>	<p>Statements like this appear throughout the OPPAGA STATUS REPORT and may create the wrong impression of the statewide program since the JAG data reporting system is based on the cycle ending 12 months after graduation. Such inconsistencies will disappear when the Florida Legislature updates the Statutes to be consistent with JAG Model provisions.</p>
	<p>"However, it appears unlikely that the program will be able to establish programs in 244 new schools over the next 18 months in order to reach the statutory goal."</p>	<p>Jobs for Florida's Graduates has focused its initial two years on the building of an infrastructure to support 300 programs in locations that are committed to implementing the JAG Model. In addition, the management team launched the JFG Leadership Council to build the organization's capacity to lead the program expansion in 2001-2002. It is suggested that the Florida Legislature should update the Statute to require JFG to establish 300 quality programs in schools throughout the State of Florida which allows for multiple programs in a school where the extreme need can be documented. The 300 school scale can be reached if adequate funding were available.</p>

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
5	"Jobs for Florida's Graduates falls short on internal core competency attainment. While not a statutory performance goal, JAG maintains an internal goal that program participants achieve 30 required core competencies. The Florida program has added seven additional competencies, resulting in a total of 37 core competencies that its participants are expedited to achieve."	<p>If the JFG Specialists were employed by Jobs for Florida's Graduates, Inc., it is believed that the core competency attainment goal would be met.</p> <p>The OPAGGA STATUS REPORT continued, "...students enrolled in programs that were open for the full 1999-2000 school year attained an average of 33 core competencies." JFG's performance exceeded the JAG national average for the same period.</p>
7	"We recommend that Jobs for Florida's Graduates report its performance consistent with statutory goals."	<p>The only reason that JFG is reporting its performance inconsistent with statutory goals is that the legislation did not include the most current JAG Model provisions. It is respectfully recommended that the Florida Legislature update the Statute to reflect the JAG Model performance requirements as contained in House Bill 313. In doing so, the Florida Legislature and OPPAGA will be able to make two significant comparisons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare JFG participants with the Florida control group for longitudinal research and evaluation purposes. • Compare JFG participants with other JAG affiliates.

INFORMATION REQUEST

PAGE	OPPAGA STATUS REPORT	RESPONSE
4	"The Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research has begun a longitudinal study of the program for the purpose of comparing program participants to a representative control group with similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds."	<p>The longitudinal study is of value to both JAG and JFG. For reporting purposes, JAG and JFG would appreciate a response to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How large is the control group? • How was the control group selected? • What are the socioeconomic and educational characteristics of the control group? • Is the control group representative of the entire state as prescribed in the Florida Statutes? • What is the source of information for the control group? • How is the information for the control group gathered?

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1

The OPPAGA STATUS REPORT views the program strictly from the existing Florida Statute. While it is believed that the inconsistencies reported in the OPPAGA STATUS REPORT will disappear if the original legislation reflected the current terminology, methodology, and performance standards of the JAG Model. It is not the Intent of Jobs for America's Graduates or Jobs for Florida's Graduates to be out of compliance with the Florida Statutes. It is our recommendation that the Florida Legislature update the legislation to mirror the JAG Model which, we believe, was the intent of the sponsors of the original legislation. These changes are Included in House Bill 313.

RECOMMENDATION #2

The Florida Legislatures should be provided the opportunity to review the 2000 ACCREDITATION REPORT as a means of accenting the success of Jobs for Florida's Graduates in implementing the JAG Model and building an infrastructure that will support the statutory expansion requirement for the future. JAG will gladly provide copies of the entire 2000 ACCREDITATION REPORT or an EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW for distribution upon request by the Florida Legislature or OPPAGA.

RECOMMENDATION #3

The Job Specialists should be employed by the non-profit corporation, Jobs for Florida's Graduates, Inc., to achieve the highest possible program and individual performance where cost and program effectiveness can best be met.

RECOMMENDATION #4

The JFG Board of Directors should take an active role in leading the statewide program and become more involved in program initiatives and events as prescribed in the JAG Model.

RECOMMENDATION #5

The 2000 legislation should encourage the establishment of multiple programs in schools where the need for JAG Model services is extreme and can be documented. The expansion goal should be 300 programs by the close of the school year 2001-2002, assuming adequate funding is available.

RECOMMENDATION #6

JFG should be commended for its commitment and progress in building a high performance organization as prescribed in the JAG Model and doing so after a difficult launch environment, as noted in the earlier Oppaga Report.

RECOMMENDATION #7

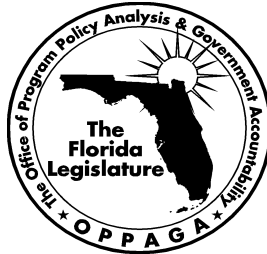
The Florida Legislature and other state leaders are invited to the 2001 NATIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR to be conducted by JAG in Orlando, Florida, in July 2001, and hosted by Jobs for Florida's Graduates. The attendance at the 2001 National Training Seminar promises to be the largest gathering of the JAG National Network.

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The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability



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