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Progress Report



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OPPAGA Recommendation Adopted; Economic Development Toolkit Was Implemented

at a glance

Since our 2001 report, the four entities responsible for administering the Toolkit for Economic Development adopted OPPAGA's recommendations, and the program operated until its grants were closed in December 2002. Workforce Florida, Inc., was designated to coordinate the initiative.

Although the program was appropriated \$25 million, it was able to award only \$13.6 million in grants to 30 distressed communities. These grants supported a broad variety of activities, such as providing computer training to welfare recipients, providing tutoring to at-risk students, and support services to grandparents and other relatives raising children in rural areas.

As a lasting benefit of the program, the entities developed an inventory that identifies federal and state resources that target Florida's distressed areas, including tax credits, incentives, and grants. This information is now on a [website](#).

Scope

In accordance with state law, this progress report informs the Legislature of actions taken by the Toolkit for Economic Development's coordinating partners in response to a 2001 OPPAGA report.^{1,2} The coordinating partners are the Department of Community Affairs; Enterprise Florida, Inc.; the Office of Urban Opportunity within the Executive Office of the Governor; and Workforce Florida, Inc.³

Background

The 2000 Legislature established the Toolkit for Economic Development to assist distressed communities by coordinating a broad array of economic development programs. The Legislature intended the Toolkit to link the many federal and state economic development programs and "enable economically

¹ Section 11.51(6), *F.S.*

² *Special Review, Slow Startup, Lack of Structure Jeopardize Toolkit for Economic Development's Implementation and Funding*, [OPPAGA Report No. 01-25](#), May 2001.

³ The legislation creating the Toolkit named the Workforce Development Board of Enterprise Florida, Inc., as a coordinating partner. Chapter 2000-165, *Laws of Florida*, re-designed the Workforce Development Board as Workforce Florida, Inc., and made it responsible for developing policies for the state's workforce initiatives. Workforce Florida Inc., was also designated as the successor to the former Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) Board, which was responsible for administering the state's welfare-to-work initiative.

distressed communities to access easily, and use effectively, federal and state tools to improve conditions in the communities and thereby help needy families avoid public assistance, retain employment, and become self-sufficient.”⁴ The Toolkit had several major components.

- **Liaisons.** Twenty-one state agencies and organizations were to designate high-level staff to serve as liaisons to the initiative. Liaisons were to identify opportunities for support and existing statutes and rules that have adverse effects on distressed communities. Liaisons also were required to propose alternatives to mitigate these adverse effects.
- **Inventory.** The liaisons were to compile an inventory that identifies and profiles federal and state resources that target distressed areas, including tax credits, incentives, and grants.
- **Grants to distressed communities.** The Toolkit was to provide grants to qualified distressed communities using a competitive proposal review process.⁵ Communities’ proposals for funding were to use various entries from the inventory that would boost their economic development efforts.

The 2000 Legislature appropriated \$25 million in non-recurring Temporary Assistance for Needy families (TANF) funds for the Toolkit. TANF moneys can be used to leverage other funds as long as the use is consistent with federal requirements. All grants awarded through the Toolkit were closed in December 2002.

⁴ Chapter 2000-290, *Laws of Florida*.

⁵ The law specifies that, to the extent possible, the communities should have designations that signify economic distress, such as empowerment or enterprise zone, Neighborhood Improvement District, Urban High Crime Area, or Rural Job Tax Credit Area. The Toolkit also targets Front Porch Florida communities.

Prior Findings ---

Our 2001 review concluded that slow progress had been made in implementing the Toolkit. When we released our May 2001 report, distressed communities had not yet had the opportunity to access Toolkit funds. Further, eligible communities had not been designated; an application process, including criteria for awarding funds, had not been finalized; and the inventory of relevant federal and state programs had not been completed. Delays in implementing the Toolkit were largely the result of no single entity being responsible for administering the initiative and overseeing its implementation.

Accordingly, we recommended that a single entity be given administrative responsibility for the Toolkit. We noted that this could be accomplished by either the Legislature amending the law or by the Toolkit’s coordinating partners entering into a Memorandum of Understanding that designated a single entity to administer the initiative.

Current Status ---

The Toolkit’s coordinating partners addressed our 2001 recommendations by entering into agreements during Fiscal Year 2001-02 designating Workforce Florida, Inc., as supporting administrator for the Toolkit. Under these agreements, the partners delegated Workforce Florida, Inc.’s president authority to sign grants, approve grant payments, and hire contract support employees. Workforce Florida, Inc., employees were made responsible for administering the grants awarded to communities under the initiative.

Once Workforce Florida, Inc., was designated the lead administrative entity for the program, progress was made in implementing the Toolkit as discussed below.

- **Awarded Toolkit grants.** Workforce Florida, Inc., with input from the 21 liaison agencies, developed a process for soliciting grant applications from community organizations. Employees of Workforce Florida, Inc., Enterprise Florida, Inc., and the Department of Community Affairs evaluated Grant applications. Department of Children and Families employees also performed an initial review of applications to determine if TANF funds could be used for the proposed projects.

Although the program was appropriated \$25 million, it was able to award only \$13,980,313 in one-time grants to 32 projects. Two of these projects with grants of \$322,066 were subsequently withdrawn at the request of grantees.⁶

The grants supported a broad variety of activities, such as providing computer training to welfare recipients, providing tutoring to at-risk students, and support services to grandparents and other relatives raising children in rural areas. A listing of these grants, the amount of funds awarded, and a brief description of each grant is contained in Appendix A.

All Toolkit grants were closed in December 2002. The 30 grantees expended \$11,078,089 of the total grant funds awarded. The unexpended balance of appropriated funds reverted to TANF for use in providing service to recipients.

Developed resource inventory. As a lasting benefit of the program, the program partners developed a website listing available economic development resources. This website, Florida Resource Directory, provides a searchable inventory of state and federal programs, funds, and other resources that can be used to assist distressed urban and rural communities.⁷ It was developed as a joint effort of the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development (OTTED), the Department of Community Affairs, the Office of Urban Opportunity, Enterprise Florida, Inc., and Workforce Florida, Inc.

⁶ All grants expired between December 15, 2001, and June 15, 2002, except for two grants that were extended to December 15, 2002.

⁷ The website address is <http://www.floridaresourcedirectory.org>.

Appendix A

Toolkit for Economic Development Grants

Grantee	Grant Title	Grant Amount	Amount Expended December 15, 2002	Brief Grant Description
1. Redlands Christian Migrant Association	Closing the Digital Divide	\$ 403,550	\$ 403,550	Offer computer literacy training to individuals receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) assistance or TANF-eligible individuals.
2. City of Quincy	Main Street Program	125,000	81,600	Develop community partnership to stimulate small business and increase employment.
3. Mt. Olive Housing and Community Development	Mt. Olive Housing and Comm. Development Corporation	300,000	300,000	Assist in the startup of 12 businesses leading to economic growth and employment opportunities.
4. Orange Blossom Trail Development Board and Safe Neighborhood Council	Safe Neighborhood Expansion Project	295,000	295,000	Demolish unsafe structures used as crack houses within a designated community and thereby reduce crime. Contractors were required to employ TANF-eligible persons for the project.
5. West Palm Beach Housing Authority	Opportunity.com	99,860	25,800	Provide TANF recipients or TANF-eligible individuals with computer training and job placement.
6. Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa, Inc.	Tampa Bay Enterprise Zone Business and Career Development	983,775	909,350	Create over 2,000 jobs over a five-year period by job training, career development, and business start-up.
7. Communities in Schools Pensacola	Read to Succeed	58,887	58,887	Partner with an elementary school to provide academic tutoring for at-risk students.
8. Black Youth Enrichment Association, Inc.	Helping Ourselves to Excellence Program (HOTED)	55,017	55,017	Offer summer youth computer-training program that included classroom training and OJT.
9. Mary Beth Morton	Parents Are Powerful	79,743	79,743	Use a multi-media campaign to stimulate family, school, and community harmony thereby reducing crime and promoting healthier families.
10. The Tampa-Hillsborough Urban League, Inc.	West Tampa Revitalization Consortium Project.	1,492,300	806,150	Renew and develop specified areas and help to stimulate small business development.
11. NW Florida Business Development Council	Opportunity Florida	327,534	310,099	Concentrate on the expansion and retention of jobs in an eight-county rural area of northwest Florida.
12. InternetCoast Economic Development Advisory Council, Inc., Digital Divide Committee.	InternetCoast Business Education and Training Center	518,732	428,032	Supply residents of the Toolkit area in Broward County with technology training, business education and training, small business development, leadership development, and training.

Grantee	Grant Title	Grant Amount	Amount Expended December 15, 2002	Brief Grant Description
13. Florida Heartland Rural Economic Initiative	Florida's Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative--Keys to Economic Recovery	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	Stimulate businesses and local economy by providing technical assistance to the rural businesses in the region.
14. Urban League of Broward County	Broward W.O.R.K.S.	1,921,707	1,921,707	Assist TANF-eligible individuals in retaining employment, promoting economic growth in the target area.
15. City of Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Agency	CRA District Economic Improvement Project	664,440	392,940	Enhance the employability of persons to be displaced in a major redevelopment effort in Riviera Beach.
16. St. Paul Community Empowerment Center, Inc.	The Lofts at Commodore Point Redevelopment and Opportunity Enhancement Project	1,900,000	1,531,537	Create a construction industry apprenticeship/mentorship program.
17. Zigfield Foundation for the Performing Arts, Inc.	St. Benedict DE Moore Education Center	530,000	88,150	Provide TANF-eligible individuals training in culinary arts, computer skills, and adult education.
18. Local Initiative Support Corp.	Project Uplift	524,750	471,775	Teach employment survival skills and develop small business/entrepreneurial classes.
19. Operation Hope, Inc.	A Hand Up!	200,000	200,000	Provide computer training for the homeless, TANF recipients and/or TANF-eligible women and children.
20. Coni Williams, Front Porch Community Liaison	West Palm Beach Front Porch, Inc.	298,450	213,750	Provide substance abuse prevention training, early identification, and treatment service for high risk, economically disadvantaged individuals.
21. The Florida Institute of Cultural and Entertainment/Arts and Children	Technical Arts Learning Entrepreneurial Network Training (T.A.L.E.N.T.)	154,838	147,938	Offer cultural and entertainment arts training along with a business development component that is set in a realistic learning environment.
22. New Beginnings Community Development Center	Youth Adult Academic Mentoring and Employment Training (YAAMET)	191,039	164,289	Offer comprehensive academic assistance, training, mentoring, and employment opportunities for TANF recipients and TANF-eligible individuals.
23. Teachers on Reach	Teachers on Reach CDA Equivalency Training Program	98,529	92,129	Enable TANF-eligible individuals to learn about the development of young children and demonstrate skills associated with childcare.
24. Asian Family and Community Empowerment Center, Inc.	Self-sufficiency Through Education for Refugee Families (SERF)	286,619	246,769	Assist individuals and families of Southeast Asian origin in finding employment, improving their employment skills, and upgrading their English skills.
25. St. Petersburg Employment and Economic Development Corporation	Contract Electronics Manufacturing Training Program	237,345	198,345	Hire persons from the surrounding community to work within the facility, train persons to work for St. Petersburg Employment and Economic Development Corporation and electronic manufacturers.

Progress Report

Grantee	Grant Title	Grant Amount	Amount Expended December 15, 2002	Brief Grant Description
26. East Gainesville Development Corporation	Northeast Gainesville /Duval Area Neighborhood Project	\$146,782	\$82,582	Provide assistance to Gainesville residents through training in leadership development, organizational and board development, empowerment skills, and community visioning.
27. New Hope Development Center, Inc.	Project 33147	239,350	220,550	Provide exposure-based social services, educational and work-force readiness programming to youth.
28. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami	Catholic Charities Pierre Toussaint Commercial Façade Renovation Program	200,000	140,000	Provided small businesses with guidance and funding to renovate their building facades and assist in economic development in the area.
29. Kinship Support Center of the University of South Florida	Developing a Network of Support for Relative Caregivers	150,000	144,900	Provide support to grandparents and other relatives raising children in counties and rural communities.
30. The Tampa Housing Authority	Tampa Housing Authority in Partnership with the Community Toolkit for Economic Development	675,000	567,500	Provide educational services, hands-on training, support services, job placement services, and aftercare to reduce risk factors.

Source: Workforce Florida, Inc., final grantee reports.

The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability



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