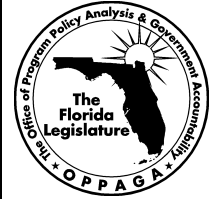




Office of Program Policy Analysis And Government Accountability



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Follow-Up Report on the Enterprise Florida Innovation Partnership and the Florida Technology Research Investment Fund

Abstract

- As we previously recommended, the Enterprise Florida Innovation Partnership has improved its system for evaluating program performance and has changed the design of the Technology Research Investment Fund.

Purpose

In accordance with s. 11.45(7)(f), F.S., this follow-up report informs the Legislature of actions taken by the Enterprise Florida Innovation Partnership in response to Report Nos. 95-07 and 95-08, issued October 18, 1995. This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the Innovation Partnership has addressed the findings and recommendations included in our reports.

Background

The Enterprise Florida Innovation Partnership was established by the Florida Legislature in 1993 (s. 288.9510, F.S.) as a public-private partnership charged with fostering the growth of small and mid-sized high technology manufacturers and increasing the number of high technology jobs in Florida.

Our previous reports addressed the Innovation Partnership's three programs: the Innovation Commercialization Corporation Program, the Manufacturing Technology Center Program, and the Technology Research Investment Fund Program. The Innovation Commercialization Corporation Program was designed to identify products that have commercial potential, and help the products' developers start a business or identify an existing business to manufacture and market the products. The Manufacturing Technology Center Program was designed to help small businesses increase their use of existing and new technologies, and improve their business practices.

The Innovation Partnership's other initiative, the Florida Technology Research Investment Fund Program, was designed to stimulate technological innovation by partnering with the private sector and the state's research universities. The Program offered funding assistance to encourage development of commercially viable, high technology products.

Prior Findings

In our prior reports, we recommended that the Legislature continue funding the Innovation Partnership for Fiscal Year 1996-97, but require the Partnership to demonstrate returns in terms of program outputs and outcomes before funding it in the future.

In addition, we noted that the Innovation Partnership had not developed performance measure baselines, expected levels of performance, or timeframes for accomplishment for its programs. The Partnership also had not developed intermediate outcome measures needed by the Legislature to assess its performance on an interim basis.

Finally, we noted that the Technology Research Investment Fund Program had made little progress toward achieving its intended outcomes. A major factor contributing to this condition was that the Innovation Partnership did not implement the Program consistently with its original intent to contract with companies instead of universities. We recommended that the Legislature not fund the Technology Research Investment Fund Program unless the Partnership contracted with companies instead of universities, implemented performance-dependent funding, and incorporated royalty or equity provisions into project contracts.

Current Status

In 1996, the Innovation Partnership was renamed the Enterprise Florida Technology Development Board and brought under the umbrella of Enterprise Florida, Inc., the state's primary economic development organization. As a result, the Legislature no longer appropriates funding to each partnership; instead, it appropriates funding to Enterprise Florida, Inc., which then allocates funding to each of the partnerships.

The Enterprise Florida Technology Development Board has implemented all of the recommendations contained in OPPAGA's previous reports. Specifically, the Board has:

- established baselines for its performance measures;
- developed methodologies and information systems for collecting performance data on its programs;
- developed intermediate outcome measures that can be used to assess program performance on an interim basis; and
- redesigned the Technology Research Investment Fund Program to contract with companies instead of universities, implement performance-dependent funding, and incorporate royalty or equity provisions into project contracts. However, Enterprise Florida did not allocate funding to this program in Fiscal Year 1997-98. According to a Program official, the Technology Development Board has since discontinued this program because of a shift in its priorities.

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