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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Florida Among Top Three States With Best Workforce Training Programs**

TALLAHASSEE—Florida ranks among the top three states with the best workforce training programs in the nation, according to a new poll by *Expansion Management* magazine.

The national business publication announced the results of its 2007 poll of top site selection experts today in conjunction with an article that appears in its latest issue. Florida is ranked No. 3 for the overall quality of its workforce training programs, behind only Georgia (No. 1) and Alabama (No. 2) in the 50-state rating.

“What an honor and a great recognition of the ability of Florida’s workforce system to deliver a highly skilled workforce,” said Workforce Florida, Inc. Chairman Katherine E. Wilson. “This No. 3 ranking is attributable to the innovation and strong partnerships that are hallmarks of Florida’s workforce system and demonstrates our commitment to sustain the Governor’s vision that Florida is indeed a state welcoming to business.”

This is the ninth year *Expansion Management* has conducted its poll of more than 80 site selection consultants and the first time in the poll’s history that any state has made a one-year advance of seven places in the rankings. Florida was ranked No. 10 in the 2006 poll.

“Florida has made great inroads in the last few years with its workforce training programs and site location consultants are taking notice,” says Ken Krizner, Managing Editor of *Expansion Management* magazine and the author of this year’s article on the poll. “These consultants have judged Florida’s workforce training programs to be some of the best in the country. This shows the state does have a workforce that is ready to go, trainable and highly skilled.”

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Contributing to Florida's top ranking and highlighted in the magazine coverage are three of the state's leading initiatives that are often tapped by newly relocated and expanding businesses—the Quick Response Training (QRT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) and Employed Worker Training (EWT) grant programs. All three programs are aimed at improving workers' skills and the competitiveness of Florida businesses. The QRT and IWT programs are administered by Workforce Florida. At least 16 of Florida's 24 regional workforce boards administer EWT programs. All three programs provide grants to help business upgrade the skills of their entry-level or experienced employees, often resulting in industry certifications and higher wages for workers. Each program requires a matching investment from the businesses for their employees' training.

Since 2000, the three programs have combined to award \$85 million to train more than 158,000 workers. This investment has been matched by businesses with more than \$1 billion to cover the cost of wages for those being trained, curriculum development, equipment and other expenses related to training, according to figures compiled by Workforce Florida.

Florida's workforce system partners include Workforce Florida, the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, 24 Regional Workforce Boards and nearly 100 one-stop centers. Collectively, they make up the Employ Florida network that provides workforce programs and services, often in collaboration with education, economic development and industry partners.

"The Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation is dedicated to providing a highly qualified and highly skilled workforce to help position Florida as an economic powerhouse," said Monesia T. Brown, Director of the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation. "Under the leadership of Governor Crist, we are working together with our business and community partners to provide a positive business climate that attracts investment and fuels economic growth. It is truly an honor to be recognized as a national leader in workforce training."

In the *Expansion Management* poll, site selection consultants are asked to rate states' workforce training programs based on their experience in advising companies opening new locations or expanding. These experts are asked to judge states based on the financial value, usage and applicability of their workforce programs. Top states are recognized for having programs that are not only high in value, but also aren't wrapped up in red-tape requirements making them difficult to use.

This is the ninth year the magazine has published state rankings for workforce training programs and the second time Florida has made it into the top 10. In 2000 and 2002,

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Florida was ranked No. 15. Rounding out the top five in the 2007 poll are South Carolina (No. 4) and Kentucky (No. 5). *Expansion Management* circulates to 45,000 executives, including CEOs and economic development leaders. Many of the magazine's subscribers are decision-makers for businesses that are seeking to expand or relocate within the next one to three years.

To listen to a Workforce Florida interview with Krizner about Florida's No. 3 ranking, visit [WorkforceFlorida.com](http://WorkforceFlorida.com). For more information on state and local workforce training programs and services, go to [EmployFlorida.com](http://EmployFlorida.com). To read *Expansion Management's* best workforce training programs poll coverage, go to [ExpansionManagement.com](http://ExpansionManagement.com).

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**Workforce Florida, Inc.** (WFI) is the state's chief workforce policy organization and principal architect in the efforts to meet the current and future workforce needs and challenges of Florida's businesses and citizens. **WFI** is a state partner, along with the **Agency for Workforce Innovation**, in the **Employ Florida** affiliate network of 24 business-led regional workforce boards and nearly 100 one-stop centers that provide employment solutions throughout Florida. Learn more about Florida's workforce resources and solutions at [EmployFlorida.com](http://EmployFlorida.com).

Workforce Florida is an equal opportunity employer/program.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

The Workforce Florida telephone number in this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.