

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Charles Bronson
Commissioner

Workforce Florida Inc.
Curtis Austin
President

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**WANTED: FLORIDA EMPLOYERS INTERESTED IN RECEIVING
GRANTS FOR AUTO SERVICE TECHNICIAN CERTIFICATION**

TALLAHASSEE - Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson announced today that Workforce Florida Inc. will work with his department to connect employers to worker training funds for auto repair shops, one of the many businesses that the department regulates.

“I would encourage any business that is seeking financial assistance in the training of its workers to contact Workforce Florida,” Bronson said. “From our point of view, increased training of workers provides better service to consumers of this state, fewer customer service disputes and fewer consumer complaints to our department.”

Bronson’s department oversees and regulates approximately 22,000 auto repair shops in Florida.

Workforce Florida is the state workforce policy board and administers the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Program.

Workforce Florida is interested in providing employers with IWT grants for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification training to automotive service technicians and mechanics. Many automotive professionals who have become ASE certified experience salary and wage increases based on their certification status.

According to the independent, non-profit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), until the early 1970s, consumers had no way to distinguish between incompetent and competent mechanics. ASE's mission is to improve the quality of vehicle repair and service through the testing and certification of repair and service professionals.

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At present, there are about 420,000 professionals nationally that hold current certifications. They work in every segment of the automotive service industry: car and truck dealerships, independent garages, fleets, service stations, franchises, and more.

According to Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation Labor Market Statistics there were 42,530 individuals employed in 2004 as automotive service technicians and mechanics. The average hourly wage is \$16.73 with entry level wages averaging \$10.23 and workers with experience averaging \$19.99 an hour.

"It is a wonderful opportunity for Workforce Florida to provide information about these training grants directly to employers in the auto repair industry that can benefit from them," said Katherine Wilson, Chairman of Workforce Florida. "Facilitating the grant process will also help employers to assist their employees in accessing training targeted to attaining advanced new skills. Everyone involved will benefit from accreditation – the individual, the employer, the community and ultimately the state."

Established in 1999, Workforce Florida's nationally recognized Incumbent Worker Training Program has provided expense reimbursement grants to more than 500 businesses throughout the state for skills upgrade training to over 50,000 employees. The program has been structured to be flexible to meet the business's training objectives. The business may use public, private, or its own in-house training provider based on the nature of the training. Through this employer-driven program, Florida is able to effectively retain and keep businesses competitive by upgrading the skills of employers' existing full-time employees.

Governor Jeb Bush has included in his recommended 2006-2007 state budget an additional \$2 million for Florida's IWT program which is currently funded with \$2 million of federal Workforce Investment Act dollars.

Commissioner Bronson is urging business owners to take advantage of this opportunity to seek training for their employees. Interested employers can obtain information and an application for the IWT program from WorkForce Florida at: www.WorkforceFlorida.com or from Commissioner Bronson's office at www.800helpfla.com. Business owners can also contact the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' toll free hotline at 800-HELP-FLA (435-7352).

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. **The Agency for Workforce Innovation** (AWI) is the lead state workforce agency and directly administers the state's Labor Market Statistics program, Unemployment Compensation, Early Learning and various workforce development programs. **WFI** is a state partner, along with **AWI**, 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 www.EmployFlorida.com.

The **Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**, through its **Division of Consumer Services**, serves as the state's clearinghouse for consumer information, complaints, and inquiries. The Division implements the state's toll-free consumer hotline to answer any consumer or business related questions. The Division functions as Florida's complaint clearinghouse, and attempts to informally mediate consumer disputes, particularly those that do

not fall within the jurisdiction of other federal, state or local agencies, such as landlord/tenant, satellite, or internet services. The Division implements several regulatory programs, as well as investigates violations involving unfair and deceptive trade practices and consumer protection laws. The regulatory programs include motor vehicle repair, solicitation of contributions, sellers of travel, pawnshops, health studios, ballroom dance studios, sellers of business opportunities, telemarketing, the Do Not Call law, game promotions, and intrastate moving companies. The Division also implements portions of the Florida Lemon Law.

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An equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.