CareerSource Central Florida

Direct Provider of Workforce Services Extension Request

For Program Year 2024-2027

1. ***A review of how the provision of direct services during the prior period fit the business model that the local workforce development board (LWDB) proposed in its original request, and any proposed changes in the business model or the particular workforce services the LWDB intends to provide during the extension period.***

CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) requests an extension of its designation as a workforce services provider for Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Sumter counties. As the provider of services for Region 12, CSCF can adapt services to meet the talent needs of local businesses and support emerging talent solutions. Additionally, directly delivering services allows CSCF to manage fiscal resources, performance, and staffing with minimal delays.

During the prior period of designation, CSCF’s operations, like the rest of the world, were impacted by the pandemic, and its teams were called to continue providing services to residents who were furloughed or laid off. The organization’s business model as a direct provider of workforce services allowed CSCF to quickly respond to these emerging and ever-changing needs, remain open, provide staff with equipment to serve customers virtually and support the communities it serves.

Over the last three years, CSCF has implemented strategies that have resulted in meeting performance and positioned the organization to effectively move forward to meet the intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act legislation, federal indicators of performance, and the new letter grade system established through the 2021 Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act. CSCF has successfully implemented several key changes to its service delivery in recent years and is committed to continuing these enhancements moving forward:

* CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) has **strategically aligned its training resources** to meet the local demand in the region's identified high-growth industries. Recognizing the sectors with the greatest potential for expansion and workforce needs, CSCF has focused its efforts on six key industries: Hospitality/Tourism, Manufacturing, Information Technology/Finance, Construction and Utilities, Transportation and Logistics, and Healthcare.

To effectively support talent development within these sectors, CSCF has tailored its services to encompass a broad spectrum of support, including recruitment, hiring, training, and retention initiatives. This targeted approach ensures that the workforce development efforts are directly contributing to the economic vitality and sustainability of these critical industries.

From Program Year 2021-2022 to the present, CSCF has facilitated extensive training opportunities, engaging over 7,400 individuals through both Florida Commerce (FC) programs and other non-Commerce initiatives funded by CARES Act and ARPA. These training programs are designed to equip participants with the necessary skills and certifications required to thrive in their respective fields, thereby enhancing job readiness and promoting long-term career success in sectors that are essential to the region's economic growth.

*Table 1-A – Training Enrollments*

* CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) **actively collaborates with various stakeholders to support economic and community development** across the five-county region, enhancing talent recruitment and training initiatives. This multifaceted approach involves strategic partnerships with key economic development entities to bolster regional efforts aimed at attracting new businesses and facilitating their initial staffing requirements.

One of our significant collaborations is with the Orlando Economic Partnership, where CSCF contributes at the "Investor Level". Our involvement includes active participation in various working groups, where we engage in discussions and strategies that shape the economic landscape of our region. This partnership enables us to align our workforce development efforts with broader economic strategies, ensuring a cohesive approach to regional growth.

Another significant collaboration is with the Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine, a coalition in Osceola County's NeoCity led by nonprofit Bridg that includes a diverse consortium comprised of Osceola County government, the University of Central Florida, Valencia College, the University of Florida, Imec USA, CareerSource Central Florida, the Florida High Tech Corridor, and the Orlando Economic Partnership, which was awarded a grant of up to $160 million over 10 years from the U.S. National Science Foundation as part of its NSF Regional Innovation Engines program focusing on semiconductor research and development.

NSF's Regional Innovation Engines program aims to expand technology and innovation while spurring economic growth across the country through unprecedented investments in people and partnerships. In line with these goals, CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF), the only workforce board in the county to be an Engine partner, plays a vital role by actively collaborating with various stakeholders to support economic and community development across the five-county region. This includes enhancing talent recruitment and training initiatives through strategic partnerships with key economic development entities to bolster regional efforts aimed at attracting new businesses and facilitating their initial staffing requirements.

Furthermore, CSCF maintains memberships with over ten local chambers of commerce throughout the region. These memberships are vital for staying connected with the business community, understanding its evolving needs, and responding effectively. Through regular interactions and engagements at chamber events, CSCF gathers valuable insights which are integral to tailoring our services to support local business requirements and economic development.

In addition to these economic partnerships, CSCF is deeply engaged with community development partners. This engagement allows us to tap into community interests, needs, and future objectives, ensuring that our efforts in workforce development are well-aligned with the broader community goals. By understanding these community dynamics, CSCF can more effectively allocate resources and design programs that contribute to sustainable community and economic growth.

Overall, CSCF’s collaborative efforts are designed to create a synergistic environment where economic and community development are interconnected, fostering a thriving region that is attractive to both businesses and talent**.** These efforts will continue to expand through the Education and Industry Consortium as required by SB 240.

* CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) has been **implementing targeted strategies designed to enhance the engagement of career seeker**s who visit our various locations. The goal is to swiftly and effectively assess their needs, thereby facilitating prompt participation in job search and preparation activities. Although there has been a decline in the overall number of customers served, our staff remains committed to fostering strong relationships. This commitment has led to significant engagement rates, with 68.8% of all visitors who seek basic services or information actively engaging in further career development activities during Program Year (PY) 2023-2024. To expand our reach and enhance service accessibility, CSCF has established approximately ten community hubs throughout the region. These hubs are strategically located in neighborhoods or communities where access to employment and training opportunities may have previously been limited. Staffed by CSCF professionals, these hubs deliver a range of basic workforce services directly to the community, thereby increasing our effectiveness in meeting local employment needs.

The flexibility inherent in CSCF's business model is a key factor in our ability to adapt swiftly to emerging needs. This agility allows us to respond dynamically to changes in the labor market or in community employment needs, ensuring that our services remain relevant and impactful. Through these efforts, CSCF continues to strengthen its role as a pivotal force in regional workforce development, facilitating economic growth and enhancing employment outcomes for career seekers across our service area.

* CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) has made **substantial progress in** **enhancing youth engagement and training** over the past three program years, focusing particularly on optimizing the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for young people and facilitating their enrollment in short-term training programs. These programs, typically lasting one year or less, are strategically designed to allow participants to quickly earn industry-recognized credentials, enhancing their employability and career prospects.

The impact of this effort is evident in the increased number of youth benefiting from these initiatives. For example, during the 2016-2017 program year, approximately 75 youth received ITAs for training. This number has significantly increased in the 2023-2024 program year, with 334 youth supported in training by the third quarter. Overall, CSCF consistently serves around 1,000 youth and young adults annually, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to fostering the next generation's workforce.

Building on this momentum, CSCF is poised to further enhance its youth programs in response to new guidelines and opportunities. Following the approval of a waiver from the U.S. Department of Labor and the issuance of Training and Employment Guidance Letter 9-22, CSCF is currently revising its strategies. These revisions aim to expand support for at-risk, in-school youth, incorporate initiatives to address their mental health needs, and increase opportunities for practical work experiences.

* CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) is committed to **enhancing its collaboration and coordination with core partners** under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To facilitate this, CSCF, supported by a designated One Stop Operator, actively engages with both required and essential WIOA partners. These partners include Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Blind Services, Adult and Family Literacy programs, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers programs, and the Senior Community Employment Program.

Our collaborative efforts are structured around regularly scheduled meetings that serve multiple purposes. First, these meetings provide an opportunity for all parties to review and assess the progress of activities and services as outlined in our mutually established Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). This regular review ensures that all initiatives are aligned and that adjustments are made promptly to address any emerging challenges or opportunities.

Second, these gatherings facilitate the confirmation and management of Infrastructure Agreement contributions. These contributions are critical as they support the operational and service delivery capabilities of the region’s full-service American Jobs Centers (AJC). By ensuring these contributions are managed effectively, CSCF and its partners help maintain and enhance the infrastructure that supports a wide range of employment and training services accessible to the community.

Through these structured interactions, CSCF not only ensures compliance with WIOA mandates but also fosters a spirit of cooperation and shared purpose among its partners. This collaborative environment is vital for creating a cohesive and comprehensive workforce development system that effectively serves the diverse needs of our community, helping individuals achieve employment success and career advancement.

**Moving forward**, CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) is committed to a multi-year plan focusing on the delivery of high-quality, customer-centric services and maintaining our standard of excellence in fiscal management. The Board has delineated clear priorities aimed at building CSCF into an exemplary organization that effectively responds to and anticipates our region's needs. The strategic directions for the upcoming years include:

* + 1. **Delivering Talent Solutions:** We are dedicated to unlocking the potential of all career seekers by cultivating intentional relationships that drive measurable outcomes. This approach involves personalized services and support mechanisms that assist individuals in navigating their career paths successfully.
		2. **Enhancing Talent Acquisition Strategies for Businesses**: CSCF will continue to develop and implement innovative talent acquisition strategies specifically tailored for businesses in high-growth industries. By understanding the unique demands of these sectors, we can more effectively connect businesses with skilled professionals who are ready to contribute to their success.
		3. **Diversifying Revenue Streams:** Recognizing the variability in funding sources, CSCF aims to diversify its revenue streams. This strategic move will not only stabilize our financial base but also allow us to expand and tailor our talent solutions to meet the needs of targeted populations, including youth, individuals with disabilities, and older workers.

These initiatives and others are comprehensively detailed in CSCF’s Strategic Four-Year Plan, which has been submitted to and approved by CareerSource Florida and the Florida Department of Commerce. This plan serves as a blueprint for our activities and goals, ensuring alignment with both state directives and local needs, thus positioning CSCF as a leader in workforce development across our region. Through these focused efforts, CSCF is set to enhance its capacity to support economic growth and workforce readiness in the coming years.

2. ***The effective date for the extension:*** July 1, 2024

3. ***The period of time for when the extension would be in effect:*** CSCF’s Request for Direct Service Provider is for a three-year period: July 1, 2024-June 30, 2027.

4. ***A review of the LWDB’s stated reasons in its previous request why the LWDB has decided to directly provide the workforce services, and an explanation of how it is still in the best interest of the LWDB’s customers that the LWDB continue to provide these services.***

As a direct service provider, CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) is uniquely positioned to effectively manage and adapt our service delivery. This model not only allows for greater flexibility in addressing local needs but also enhances our capacity to respond swiftly to changes in legislation, local or regional demands, and emergency situations such as natural disasters or health crises like COVID-19.

By leveraging all available program funds and attracting local resources, including the American Rescue Plan, CSCF has been able to maintain and often increase the services offered to our customers, ensuring consistent levels of support despite varying funding levels. As a direct provider, we effectively mitigate additional costs related to profit, overhead, and administrative fees, allowing for a more efficient allocation of resources. Despite reductions in funding, our fiscal prudence has enabled us to sustain customer services with minimal disruption.

CSCF serves as an effective convener, partner, and decision-maker, directly engaging with community organizations without the need for third-party negotiation. We have fostered strong relationships with entities such as Hope Florida, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Division of Blind Services, Community Action Agencies, YouthBuild, Job Corps, United Way, Housing and Urban Development, and other community-based organizations. These partnerships enhance our ability to refer customers and businesses to complementary services and leverage additional resources.

Our community and business partnerships have been instrumental in addressing workforce development needs. This is evidenced by our investment of approximately $17 million in National Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant funds over three years, serving 1,815 customers and achieving an 88% placement rate, with an average wage of $18.11 per hour for those placed.

In terms of performance, CSCF consistently meets or exceeds federal performance measures, contributing significantly to the state's overall workforce development outcomes. As the second largest region in the state, the performance of CSCF is critical. We are particularly focused on enhancing our strategies to engage customers and meet training and employment outcomes, including Measurable Skills Gains—an area identified for improvement. Our direct service model also facilitates a quicker adaptation of strategies to improve training and employment placement, particularly for youth following the post-common exit implementation.

This year, with the implementation of the new letter grade system established by the 2021 Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, CSCF has excelled, earning an 'A+' achieving a 97.69% grade in the subsequent quarter.

Moving forward, CSCF remains committed to serving the diverse populations within our region and continuing to deliver personalized, high-quality services that support residents in securing sustainable employment. As we continue to adapt and innovate, our focus remains steadfast on enhancing the economic well-being of our community through strategic workforce development initiatives.

5. ***A review of the effectiveness of the firewall established by the LWDB to clearly separate existing roles as oversight body for the region’s workforce delivery system and its role as the operational services directly provided by the LWDB, and an explanation of changes to be made to the firewall.***

The Career Services Committee of the CSCF Board of Directors oversees all program services. The Committee convenes up to six times annually to review program performance, develop strategic initiatives, and provide industry insights, particularly in relation to the Board's identified high-growth industries. During these meetings, the Chief Operating Officer of CSCF presents action items for discussion, which are subsequently recommended for the Board of Directors' final approval.

In compliance with the requirements outlined under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §§678.600 - 678.635, the role of the One Stop Operator has been clearly defined by the Board of Directors and approved by the Career Services Committee in December 2016. The defined roles are as follows:

**One Stop Operator:** A consultant or contractor responsible for coordinating the service delivery of all required One Stop partners, including Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Division of Blind Services across our five-county region.

**Career Service Provider:** An entity tasked with directly delivering career services for Title I WIOA, Wagner Peyser, Veterans, Trade, Welfare Transition, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This role aligns with the local area’s four-year plan and is responsible for managing programs to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements.

CSCF has selected and contracted a One Stop Operator to work in collaboration with the Chief Operating Officer to coordinate all required partners and develop strategies for enhanced resource and service coordination. These strategies and recommendations are brought before the Board’s Career Services Committee for discussion and consideration. Actions requiring full Board approval are presented accordingly. Upon approval, the President & CEO is directed to commence implementation, with the support of the appropriate Board staff.

CSCF is committed to maintaining the necessary separation between the One Stop Operator and the Career Services Provider to ensure integrity and effectiveness in service delivery. We will continue to uphold these firewalls to safeguard our operations and program efficacy.

6. ***An identification of the grant program(s) that funds the workforce service delivery model.***

The following grant programs fund CareerSource Central Florida’s service delivery model:

* + - Wagner Peyser
		- Re-employment and Eligibility (RESEA)
		- J VSG
		- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act – Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth (WIOA)
		- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
		- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
		- Specialized Grants/Awards – National Emergency Grant, Trade Adjustment Assistance, YouthBuild(USDOL), Get There Faster – At-Risk Floridians Grant, Single Mothers Employment Support Grant, Support to Communities: Fostering Opioid Recovery through Workforce Development (USDOL)
		- Non-Department of Labor programs funded through CARES, ARPA, CSBG.

7. ***An analysis of the costs of the services that documents the actual reduction in costs with the LWDB providing the services rather than contracting that service to another provider, and an estimate of such costs and savings for the upcoming period.***

As a direct operator of services, CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) has effectively demonstrated its capability to strategically manage and adjust administrative costs, and to establish a robust cost allocation methodology. This approach ensures that a greater portion of resources is directed towards supporting both business and career services. By controlling costs based on service volume, CSCF ensures that all programs equitably share infrastructure costs, while avoiding additional administrative, profit, or overhead fees.

CSCF continues to manage its administrative costs with precision and efficiency. In the 2022-2023 program year, CSCF reported administrative costs that were 7.82% lower than the state's maximum allowed 10%, resulting in an annual savings of approximately $1,100,000. These savings were subsequently allocated to direct services, reaffirming our commitment to prioritizing client service delivery. CSCF consistently maintains administrative costs below the 10% cap and strategically plans budgets to prioritize direct client services.

Within our program services, Region 12 allocated 93% of its resources to direct client services, with an impressive 52.5% devoted to intensive training activities. This significantly exceeds the state requirement of allocating at least 30.0% of WIOA expenditures on training, showcasing CSCF's strong commitment to enhancing training initiatives. Furthermore, CSCF has never requested a waiver to lower the ITA investment requirement since the inception of this policy, underscoring our consistent commitment to investing in workforce development and training activities. This strategic focus ensures that Region 12 not only meets but often surpasses state goals, directly contributing to the enhanced employability and skills development of our clients.

8. ***A review of any other realized improvement to service delivery and performance outcomes, and description of anticipated improvements.***

CSCF has implemented various strategies to improve service delivery and improve outcomes:

***Implementation of Organizational Excellence Model****:* CSCF has worked to adopt and implement a management framework consistent with Malcolm Baldrige Criteria that will assist the organization in aligning its leadership and strategies to its workforce, operations, and results. Through its work with the Florida Sterling Council, the organization has focused on continuous improvement, strategic planning, market research, workforce capacity building, and data-driven decision making, Integration of efforts will result in clear processes that lead to better management practices and sustained performance. CSCF continues to evolve its organizational excellence model and is learning more about Jobs for the Future’s approach to future-focused workforce boards and the characteristics to strengthen the system’s ability to lead ([How Workforce Boards Show the Way Toward the Future of Work | Jobs for the Future (JFF)](https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/awake/how-workforce-boards-future-of-work/)).

***Call Center and Virtual Service****:*
In 2018, CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) established an innovative call center designed to enhance service accessibility and efficiency for both career seekers and businesses across the region. Initially set up to provide frontline services, the call center handled tasks such as customer scheduling, state system account support, and assistance with SNAP and TANF case statuses. It also served as a vital resource for disseminating information on key services and resources available through CSCF.

Since its inception, the call center has been transitioning into a more comprehensive Customer Care Center. This enhanced center now offers basic Wagner Peyser services, which include employment service assistance for job seekers and recruitment services for employers. Additionally, the Customer Care Center facilitates appointment scheduling and provides initial support to veterans, particularly in establishing remote connections as needed.

A significant part of the Customer Care Center's role also involves technical support, such as assisting with pin resets for the Connect system, which is essential for users accessing unemployment compensation services. This evolution reflects CSCF's commitment to continually improving the quality and range of services offered, ensuring that they meet the growing needs of our community in a digital age. By continuing to evolve into a full-service Customer Care Center, CSCF aims to streamline processes and enhance the user experience, providing a single point of contact for comprehensive support and services.

***Career Exploration Academies***

CareerSource Central Florida has strategically implemented Career Exploration Academies across a range of sectors, effectively connecting industries with potential employees. These academies have proven pivotal in providing job seekers with the opportunity to discover their interests and aptitudes, thereby facilitating a more informed transition into relevant training programs or direct employment opportunities.

Key Features and Outcomes of the Career Exploration Academies:

Industry-Specific Insights: Each academy is designed to immerse participants in the specific realities and demands of different industries. This targeted approach helps job seekers gain a practical understanding of potential career paths, aligning their skills and interests with market needs.

Comprehensive Job Readiness: A core component of the academies is the integration of the Florida Ready to Work credentialing program. This credential serves as a benchmark for job readiness, equipping participants with the essential skills verified by employers as critical for workplace success. The effective use of this credentialing system has led to impressive outcomes in enhancing the employability of participants.

Facilitating Employment Opportunities: The academies have been instrumental in not just training but also in placing job seekers in suitable roles. By providing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, the academies prepare participants for the workforce, often resulting in direct employment opportunities immediately following program completion.

Scalability and Best Practices: Recognized as a best practice, the model of the Career Exploration Academies has been successfully scaled across multiple projects. This scalability demonstrates the adaptability and effectiveness of the academies in meeting diverse industry needs and workforce challenges.

The Career Exploration Academies at CareerSource Central Florida exemplify a successful strategy in workforce development, bridging the gap between industry requirements and job seeker capabilities. As we continue to refine and expand these academies, they remain a cornerstone of our efforts to strengthen the regional economy through targeted skill development and employment readiness initiatives.

9.***Documentation that the public was provided a meaningful opportunity for review and comment on the proposed extension for a period not less than 10 days. Any submitted comments must be included.***

CSCF’s Request for Direct Service Provider status is consistent with the region’s strategic plan that was posted for comment on CSCF’s website as required under CareerSource Florida’s WIOA Strategic Plan Instructions. Additionally, this was shared with our Career Services Committee and the Board of Directors. CSCF will post this request on its website under the “About Us” tab. The organization will file an addendum to this submission if there is a substantive comment that affects its response.

10. ***Documentation that the Chief Elected Official has agreed to the planned extension****.*

CareerSource Central Florida’s Consortium of Chief Elected officials will meet jointly with the CSCF Board of Directors in June 2024 when this action item will be presented. After the Consortium’s approval, the request will be presented to the Board of Directors for their final action. Signatures affirming the approval of this request will be submitted to Florida Commerce at that time.

 *Submitted by:*

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