



PRESS RELEASE

DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES THAT WORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MEDIA CONTACT:

Marian Smith
Tel. 305.594.7615

SOUTH FLORIDA WORKFORCE TO OFFER NO-COST MICROSOFT TRAINING VOUCHERS

Elevate America program to provide free training, certification exams

(MIAMI, May 24, 2010) —Reinforcing its ongoing commitment to digital literacy and a highly skilled workforce, South Florida Workforce is working with Workforce Florida Inc., the Agency for Workforce Innovation and Microsoft as part of an innovative, public-private partnership to provide free technology training to individuals in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Through Microsoft® Elevate America, Florida has received 35,000 vouchers statewide for no-cost, online technology training and certification through any of the state's 24 Regional Workforce Boards, including South Florida Workforce.

South Florida Workforce will distribute nearly 7,000 vouchers, including about 3,000 general E-Learning vouchers, 3,000 Certification Exam vouchers and 800 IT Professional vouchers. All are available on a first-come, first-served basis by individual request through South Florida Workforce.

“We welcome the opportunity to bring the Elevate America program to our community,” said Rick Beasley, Executive Director of South Florida Workforce. “It’s a great complement to other investments South Florida Workforce continues to make aimed at creating opportunities for workers to improve their technology skills and help our businesses compete in what is an increasingly global, high-tech marketplace.”

Each training voucher is redeemable for one E-Learning course or Certification exam. E-Learning courses, available online, are self-paced and offer beginning and intermediate training on Microsoft Windows or on one of the programs in the Microsoft Office Suite. Also offered are IT Professional vouchers for courses tailored to the needs of individuals on technical professional career tracks in areas such as web development or database management. Certification exams must be taken at Certiport Testing Centers, some of which may charge a small fee for exam proctoring.

Elevate America is part of Florida’s ongoing efforts to provide resources to individuals and employers seeking talent development resources. The initiative was launched in Tallahassee Monday with a news conference by Governor Charlie Crist and leaders from Workforce Florida, the Agency for Workforce Innovation and Microsoft.

“Microsoft’s timing could not be better,” said Chris Hart IV, Workforce Florida President and CEO. “The workforce system’s No. 1 priority is getting Floridians back to work, and this initiative is one more tool to help us do that across the state. In particular, we are committed to increasing digital access and literacy

in Florida. Elevate America is not only helping us advance that goal, but it also is shoring up our efforts to raise awareness of the importance of digital literacy and access to every Floridian.”

For South Florida Workforce, the initiative is the latest in a series of technology-related efforts supporting its strategic priority for bridging the digital divide in South Florida communities and improving digital literacy at every level of the workforce. South Florida Workforce recently launched its Digital Divide Project partnering with Per Scholas Inc. to provide low-income families with free technology training, a refurbished personal computer and one-year of paid Internet access. To date, about 150 computers have been awarded with a goal of serving 400 families. The families are selected from work-ready participants receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). South Florida Workforce also awarded the city of Miami \$300,000 to cover the cost of instructor-led digital literacy courses offered to more than 1,000 TANF-eligible residents in Miami-Dade through a separate initiative with Microsoft known as Elevate Miami. Additionally, South Florida Workforce has committed up to \$60,000 for a study on digital skills literacy in South Florida for the Miami-Dade Broadband Coalition. The study, currently underway by Everest University, will be an invaluable tool for Coalition partners, communitywide, to ensure the region has a benchmark of workers’ skills and an assessment of business needs to improve investment in training and education.

Through this latest initiative, Elevate America, South Florida Workforce is making available no-cost vouchers by contacting elevateamerica@southfloridaworkforce.com or by visiting <http://elevateamerica.floridajobs.org/> Elevate America Florida vouchers will be available from May 24th, through August 21st, or while supplies last. All Florida vouchers must be activated by August 21st, and Certification exam vouchers must be activated and used by August 21st. E-Learning vouchers are good for 12 months after the date of activation. There are no income requirements for the Elevate America program in Florida, which primarily targets adults and graduating high school seniors.

Florida is the 24th state to participate in Elevate America, a groundbreaking initiative to prepare workers for the demands of a 21st Century economy. Microsoft announced the Elevate America program at the National Governors Association Winter Conference in February 2009. The initiative is expected to provide up to 1 million vouchers nationwide for Microsoft E-Learning courses and select Microsoft Certification exams at no or low cost to recipients. The program is a part of Microsoft’s overall efforts to provide technology training for up to 2 million people during the next three years.

“We created the Elevate America program to help equip people with the critical technology skills they need in today’s competitive workplace,” said Terrance Herron, Director of State Government Affairs at Microsoft Corporation. “We believe this type of public-private partnership will play an important role in rebuilding Florida’s and the nation’s economy by offering immediate access to basic technology literacy and skills training to ultimately improve recipients’ employment prospects.”

###