

Florida Inmate Workforce Initiative

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Program Information

Period of Performance	Start Date: 7/1/2024 End Date: 6/30/2025
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Overview

The Florida Inmate Workforce Initiative (FIWI) is a collaborative effort between UF/IFAS Extension and the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC). This partnership delivers certificate programs to incarcerated individuals across Florida. FIWI is designed to provide career-focused education and certifications that support successful re-entry, reduce recidivism, and build a stronger, more resilient Florida workforce. Initiated statewide in January 2024, the program currently features nine tracks in 16 correctional institutions.

Each year, over 700,000 inmates are released from U.S. prisons, with 40% of those from state prisons returning within three years, costing about \$30,000 annually per inmate. Education programs during incarceration reduce the risk of reincarceration by 13%, and vocational training increases post-release employment by 28%. For every dollar spent on prison education, incarceration costs are reduced by four to five dollars in the first three years after release.

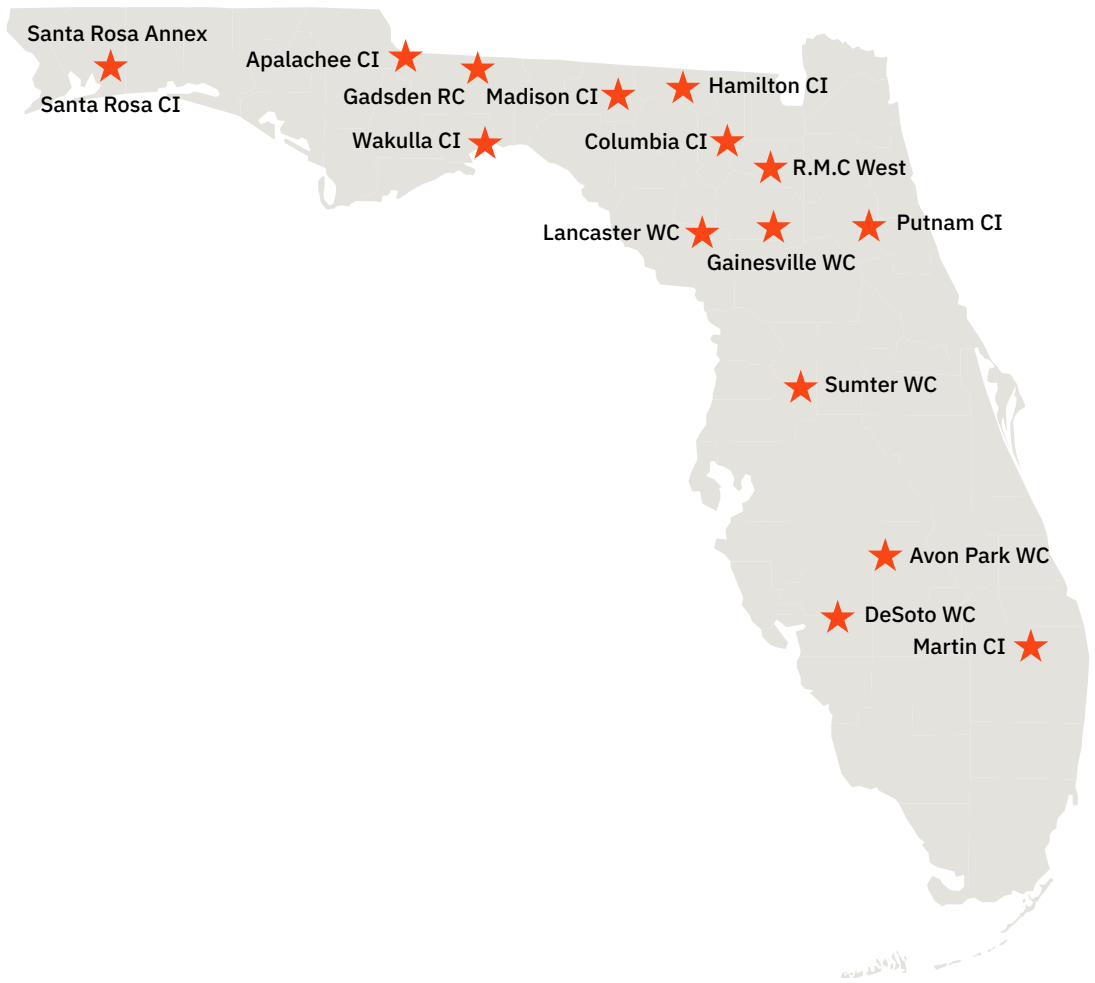
Objectives

- Short term:** Offer educational programs to support incarcerated populations. As a result of this Extension program, at least 400 incarcerated students will participate in training annually, and *about 50% will gain new knowledge*, as measured by pre-post surveys and/or program completion certificates.
- Mid-term:** Increase the number of correctional institutions participating in this program/number of programs offered and increase sharing of information and services by partner organizations. As a result of this program, after three years, at least one partner organization will contribute to a comprehensive “What’s Next” informational toolkit for inmates to utilize upon release, providing them with essential resources to support their successful reintegration into society.
- Long term:** Improve the quality of life of incarcerated populations. (a) reduce recidivism rates by providing comprehensive educational & vocational training; (b) decrease expenditure on inmate sustenance; (c) improve community safety by equipping inmates with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful reintegration into society, thereby reducing repeat offenses, (d) increase quality of life through economic purchasing power through gainful employment and financial literacy.

Educational Programs

Program Name	Program Description
Beginning Farmer (27 sessions)	Covers topics such as building healthy soils, planning crop rotations, using cover crops, choosing a variety of crops, determining fertilizer application rates, developing an insect pest scouting plan, developing an integrated pest management plan, designing irrigation systems, marketing farm products, plant pathology, entomology, pesticide safety, machinery and equipment safety, ergonomics, composting, nematology, field preparation & planting, weed management, harvesting and post-harvest handling (including food safety), seeds and seed saving, whole farm design & management, farm data collection and farm bio-security.
Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) (3 sessions)	GI-BMPs are educational programs for people working in lawn care and landscape maintenance. The GI-BMP program teaches environmentally safe landscaping practices that help conserve and protect Florida's ground and surface waters. The GI-BMP certification is a required prerequisite to obtain an urban fertilizer applicator license in the state of Florida.
Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Maintenance Training (1 session)	The GSI Maintenance Training is an add-on training to the GI-BMP training, designed for landscape professionals to learn how to maintain Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) within the urban landscape. The training includes seven modules that introduce the types of GSI, the functions of GSI, common maintenance to ensure proper operation of GSI as part of stormwater management systems, and personal safety.
Business Basics (4 sessions)	Topics covered include marketing, business planning, business structures, taxes, insurance, product pricing, and financial statements. Modules include homework and/or classroom activities to reinforce the material covered. Teach in-person and include time to explain homework assignments and follow up with a class to review homework and in-class activities.
Personal Financial Education (9 sessions)	Designed to provide basic financial information on a wide variety of topics including applying and interviewing for a job, understanding myths and realities of business ownership, creating a spending plan, banking basics, ways to save, credit reports, background screening reports and your rights, estate planning, purchasing an automobile, debt, and more!
FNGLA-CHP (Certified Horticulture Professional) (52 sessions)	This program is the industry standard for measuring horticulture knowledge on everything from plant and pest identification to landscape management. The certification is designed for those working in the horticulture industry or studying to enter the field. The instructors will give the inmates a UF certificate of training and much of the knowledge they need to pass the required FNGLA CHP certification exams.
Farm Practicum (76 sessions)	Extension educators will supervise and guide farm squad during farming sessions. Offers inmates a chance to put into practice the knowledge they gain from their horticultural training.
Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance – (LCLM) (4 sessions)	This certification training gives trainees an initial training for state-level certification. A certificate of training will be provided to inmates who pass the exam. The LCLM allows commercial landscape maintenance personnel to make pesticide applications (using materials with a signal word of Caution) to ornamental plants and plant beds only. Training will cover integrated pest management, identification of common landscape pests and weeds, and pesticide safety.

Institutions



Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes - Impacts		
			Short-term	Medium	Long-term
Team members Community partners Florida Department of Corrections resources	Develop and deliver educational programs for incarcerated students	Curriculums, slide decks, lesson plans	Increased knowledge and skills related to offered classes	Increased number of extension agents incorporate and adapt programs	Reduced recidivism rates
	Collaborate with Department of Corrections	Surveys, assessments	Increased accessibility of educational materials	Increased sharing of information and services by partner organizations	Decreased disciplinary conflicts in prison
	Assessing inmates' performance	Certificates	Increased partner commitment to program activities	Increased number of skilled workforces	Increased opportunities for employment after release
		Rosters			Decreased economic burden
		Reports			
		Number of trained inmate students			

Instructors

Name	Focus
Alissa Hevesh	Business Basics
Carol Roberts	Business Basics
Carrie Stevenson	Green Industries Best Management Practices (GIBMP)
Cesar Peralta	GIBMP
CLAY OLSON	GIBMP
Christine Kelly-Begazo	GIBMP, Beginning Farmer, Farm Practicum, FNGLA–CHP (Certified Horticulture Professional), Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance (LCLM)
Damilola Ajayi	Beginning Farmer
Eban Bean	Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)
George Richardson	GIBMP
Mark Tancig	GIBMP
MARK YARICK	Business Basics
Mary Salinas	GIBMP
Natalie Parkell	Beginning Farmer
Richard Tyson	GIBMP
Samantha Kennedy	Business Basics
SHELIA DUNNING	Beginning Farmer
Stephen Jennewein	Beginning Farmer
Travis Stanley	Beginning Farmer
Yvette Goodiel	FNGLA-CHP

Educational Methods and Activities

- Designed and delivered educational materials, curricula, and evaluation tools to support extension agents and individuals interested in teaching.
 - Developed protocols for extension agents working within correctional institutions.
- Employment connections were initiated and summarized.
 - A total of 20 instructors (extension agents and other interested individuals) completed the New Employee/ Refresher Training Program, totaling 49 training days.

• Alissa Hevesh • Eban Bean • Samantha Kennedy • Carol Roberts • George Richardson	• Stephen Jennewein • Carrie Stevenson • LuAnn Duncan • Tatiana Sanchez • Cesar Peralta	• Mark Tancig • Travis Stanley • Christine Kelly-Begazo • Mary Salinas • Yvette Goodiel	• Cyndi Longley • Natalie Parkell • Sheila Dunning • Damilola Ajayi • Richard Tyson
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Program Completion Performance

Institution	Program	Completion Date	#Enrolled	#Tested	#Certificates	Certification Rate
Apalachee CI	GIBMP	3/5/2025	9	9	9	100%
Apalachee CI	GSI	3/5/2025	9	9	3	33%
Avon Park WC	Business Basics	6/17/2025	25	25	25	100%
Avon Park WC	GIBMP	4/23/2025	23	22	22	100%
Columbia CI	Beginning Farmer	1/27/2025	24	16	16	100%
Columbia CI	Business Basics	5/22/2025	23	23	23	100%
Columbia CI	GIBMP	10/7/2024	20	17	16	94%
Columbia CI	GSI	10/7/2024	20	16	8	50%
DeSoto WC	Beginning Farmer	6/27/2025	28	13	13	100%
DeSoto WC	Business Basics	4/11/2025	25	25	25	100%
DeSoto WC	GIBMP	6/30/2025	26	25	24	96%
Gadsden RC	Business Basics	6/25/2025	25	25	19	76%
Gadsden RC	GIBMP	8/16/2024	14	13	13	100%
Gadsden RC	GSI	8/20/2024	16	16	6	38%
Gainesville WC	Beginning Farmer	5/20/2025	26	10	10	100%
Gainesville WC	Business Basics	4/9/2025	13	12	12	100%
Gainesville WC	GIBMP	6/17/2025	15	12	12	100%
Hamilton CI	Beginning Farmer	5/19/2025	21	18	18	100%
Hamilton CI	Business Basics	11/21/2024	19	15	15	100%
Hamilton CI	GIBMP	6/25/2025	23	23	21	91%
Lancaster WC	Beginning Farmer	1/14/2025	16	15	15	100%
Lancaster WC	Business Basics	1/28/2025	20	18	18	100%
Lancaster WC	GIBMP	4/23/2025	19	17	17	100%
Madison CI	Business Basics	10/17/2024	16	15	15	100%

Institution	Program	Completion Date	#Enrolled	#Tested	#Certificates	Certification Rate
Madison CI	GIBMP	3/31/2025	23	21	21	100%
Martin CI	Beginning Farmer	12/18/2024	20	17	17	100%
Martin CI	Business Basics	5/23/2025	17	17	17	100%
Martin CI	Farm Practicum	6/3/2025	39	20	19	95%
Martin CI	FNGLA CHP	6/4/2025	22	16	16	100%
Martin CI	GIBMP	3/21/2025	27	23	23	100%
Martin CI	GSI	3/24/2025	27	27	20	74%
Martin CI	LCLM	6/9/2025	24	16	16	100%
Putnam CI	Beginning Farmer	4/8/2025	20	20	20	100%
Putnam CI	Business Basics	5/27/2025	19	19	19	100%
Putnam CI	GIBMP	6/13/2025	19	17	16	94%
RMC West	Beginning Farmer	1/27/2025	17	16	16	100%
RMC West	Business Basics	5/1/2025	20	20	20	100%
RMC West	GIBMP	2/25/2025	28	28	26	93%
Santa Rosa CI	Beginning Farmer	1/31/2025	20	NA	NA	NA
Santa Rosa CI	GIBMP	11/14/2024	19	17	17	100%
Santa Rosa CI	GIBMP	6/13/2025	15	13	13	100%
Sumter WC	Beginning Farmer	5/21/2025	20	10	10	100%
Sumter WC	Business Basics	5/29/2025	25	25	25	100%
Sumter WC	GIBMP	6/27/2025	24	23	19	83%
Wakulla CI	Business Basics	6/23/2025	19	19	19	100%
Wakulla CI	GIBMP	11/26/2024	20	17	13	76%
Wakulla CI	GSI	11/26/2024	20	11	1	9%
			979	821	758	92%

Performance Evaluation

A total of 979 students enrolled in educational training programs across 16 correctional facilities. **821 students were tested**, and **758 certificates** (92%) were issued.

Program	Number of Cohorts	Number of Certificates
Beginning Farmer	9	135
Business Basics	13	252
GIBMP	16	282
GSI	5	38
Farm Practicum	1	19
FNGLA CHP	1	16
LCLM	1	16
Total	46	758

Employment Connections

Employment connections were made with two new agribusinesses and continued with the FNGLA. Two agribusinesses on Ms. Goodiel’s Extension Advisory Council expressed interest in potentially hiring inmates. Ms. Goodiel connected the agribusinesses with Ms. Natalie Dixon-Williams, FDC Region IV Community Transition Programs Coordinator, for further discussion as to the hiring process. One of the agribusinesses met with Ms. Dixon-Williams to discuss the next steps, while the other agribusiness shared that he is waiting to move forward until he is ready to hire someone. Ms. Goodiel shared with the latter agribusiness that advance discussion is still beneficial, as the FDC initiates hiring discussions during the transition period prior to inmate release. Additionally, Dr. Gorucu and Ms. Goodiel met with Merry Mott of the FNGLA to continue discussions on the FNGLA Apprenticeship Program, which is open to ex-inmates.

Success Story: Apprenticeship Launch Through Business Basics

In Fall 2024, a Business Basics student at Madison Correctional Institution expressed strong interest in post-release apprenticeship opportunities introduced during class by instructor, Mark Yarick. Although initially ineligible for work release, Mr. Yarick advocated for him by submitting documentation of a secured apprenticeship offer. The request was ultimately approved. He began his registered apprenticeship prior to release, earning \$18/hour with full benefits, daily transportation, and a promised wage increase of \$19.50 after one year and \$22 after 18 months. Upon completion, he will hold 1.5 years of industry experience and a recognized certificate, qualifying him to sit for the FAA Airframe license exam, which the employer will fund upon the previous student’s good standing with the company. His success has not only transformed his own reentry path but also inspired peers to pursue similar employment-focused opportunities through the program.

Leadership and Mentorship in Horticulture

Over a three-year period, a student in the FIWI program at Martin Correctional Institution served as a trusted aide to program instructor Christine Kelly, providing consistent and invaluable support across multiple horticulture and agriculture classes. He completed the full curriculum offered through the UF program, consistently ranking in the top 10% of each class cohort. Demonstrating a strong commitment to professional development, he earned the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) Certified Horticultural Professional (CHP) certification prior to his release. In the spring of 2025, as a returning citizen, he continued to contribute to the program by assisting in the revision of key instructional materials, most notably the plant identification presentations used in CHP training, which are now being adopted at additional institutions. His outstanding performance, professionalism, and growth have led to a recommendation for a paid support position with other UF faculty, underscoring both the program’s impact and his promise for continued success in the horticulture field.