

FLORIDA CHAMBER FOUNDATION RELEASES SURVEY FINDINGS



[caption id="attachment_6069" align="alignnone" width="150" caption="florida flag"]

Carrie Blanchard works as the director of research and policy for the Florida Chamber Foundation. She said that it is imperative to figure out why companies arrive in Florida and leave the state so quickly. There are 840,000 people in the state currently out of work. The foundation produced a survey of 19 firms that either moved to or from Florida. The survey cites a negative list of items mentioned by the firms. The list of negative items includes property taxes, issues with finding skilled workers and the affordability of housing. The positives from the list include transportation, lack of crime and the weather. In 2011, Florida acquired 1,152 more firms than it lost and it took more companies than it lost from the states of New Jersey, Michigan, New York, Ohio and Illinois. Florida did experience a net loss of companies to the states of Texas, South Carolina, California, Nevada and Washington. In the survey, almost one out of every four companies (22.7 percent) said that they were 'not satisfied' with the opportunity to recruit a skilled worker in the state of Florida. The survey also notes that one in 10 companies mentioned displeasure with culture, infrastructure and safety. "Training programs to develop relevant workforce skills are likely to help companies find appropriate workers," the report from the foundation said. "In addition, many firms indicated a need for highly skilled labor, which suggests a policy role for specialized education and training." Close to half of the companies surveyed said that the tax system of the state was 'somewhat of a burden' and 42 percent of companies said almost the same thing about the state's corporate income tax. "The No. 1 reason why they come is quality of life — typically relocations or expansions have a lot to do with where the CEOs want to live," said Kelly Smallridge. Smallridge is the president of the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County. Smallridge said that companies like to set up shop in Palm Beach County because of access to three ports, a diverse and multilingual workforce, no state income tax, affordable housing, plenty of accountants and lawyers close by and access to the Caribbean and Latin markets. She said some reasons they do not come to the county include it being too far south, mergers and delays in approval for developing property. Smallridge also mentioned the perception that the schools in the county are not up to par, but "if they will just give me a chance to let them tour a school, I never lose a deal. I wonder if we lose deals because we never got a chance." BioFlorida is a company with headquarters in West Palm Beach and the president, Russell Allen, said, "We're known as a great place to visit and a tourism state, but that may have obscured the fact we're a good place to do business. We are the fastest-growing state in the country in creating biotech and pharmaceutical jobs."

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