

# Agency Snapshot:

## Department of Economic Opportunity

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is Florida's newest agency. DEO was launched October 1, 2011, to place a greater focus on economic development and jobs. The agency combines parts of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), and the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development (OTTED). DEO is subdivided into four divisions:

The Division of Strategic Business Development is responsible for development of a state business strategic plan. This Division serves as the single point of contact for state agencies for approving economic incentives, and it is responsible for analyzing and evaluating business prospects that may be identified by the Governor, Enterprise Florida, Inc., or internally. The Division also administers a number of tax refund, tax credit, and grant programs.

The Division of Workforce Services administers the state's Unemployment Compensation and Workforce Services programs. The Unemployment Appeals Commission is an independent commission housed within DEO for administrative support purposes. These programs were transferred from the former AWI. The Workforce Services program responsibilities are carried out through a performance agreement with Workforce Florida, Inc. The state's workforce development system is carried out through cooperative agreements between DEO and each of the state's 24 Regional Workforce Boards, with policy direction from Workforce Florida, Inc.

The Division of Community Development is comprised of programs transferred from the Community Planning Division and the Division of Housing and Community Development of the former DCA, as well as small business, rural and urban development incentive programs transferred from OTTED. While DEO is less involved in growth management

litigation than was DCA, the Division of Community Development continues to assist Florida's communities with planning for the impacts of growth and development. Statutes relating to the DRI program and Areas of Critical State Concern were transferred in *toto*. This Division administers the Uniform Special District Accountability Act, the Small Cities Community Development Block Program, the Community Services Block Grant Program, and the Low-Income Energy Assistance and Weatherization Assistance Programs.

The Division of Finance & Administration is the agency's administrative arm, overseeing budget, financial management, financial monitoring, human resources, and general services.

### Head of the Agency:

Doug Darling, Executive Director  
Caldwell Building  
107 W. Madison Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-4120

### Agency Clerk:

Miriam Snipes  
Caldwell Building  
107 W. Madison Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-4120  
850-245-7150

### Agency Clerk for Unemployment Appeals Commission

Dorothy Johnson  
2740 Centerview Dr. Ste 101  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-4151

### Public Records Requests:

[DEO\\_comments@deo.myflorida.com](mailto:DEO_comments@deo.myflorida.com)  
FAX: 850-921-3230  
Press Requests: Public Affairs  
850-717-5600  
Unemployment Comp. Requests:  
850-245-7105  
Other Requests/Office of the General Counsel: 850-245-7150

### Hours of Operation:

Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM

### General Counsel:

Deborah K. Kearney  
Caldwell Building  
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Tallahassee, FL 32399-4120  
850-245-7150  
[debbykearney@deo.myflorida.com](mailto:debbykearney@deo.myflorida.com)

Debbly Kearney has a wide array of experience in state government over the past 30 years, having served as General Counsel for the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Education, the Florida House of Representatives, the State Courts System, the Department of State, the Constitution Revision Commission, and as the Deputy General Counsel for the Governor. She is a graduate of Florida State University College of Law (1981). Debbly chaired the Administrative Law Section (05-06) and continues to serve on the Section's Executive Council (1996-Present), was the 2001 recipient of The Florida Bar Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer award, and is AV-rated.

**Number of lawyers on staff:** 10, plus 1 OPS

### Kinds of Cases:

In addition to traditional agency litigation in such areas as bid protests, human resources, employee garnishments, and torts, the following cases are handled by the Department:

- Comprehensive plan compliance when an important state interest is concerned
- Challenges to DRI development orders
- Challenges to development orders in Areas of Critical State Concern
- Challenges to disallowances as result of misexpenditures of grant funds
- Appeals of Unemployment Compensation tax determinations
- Collections cases brought by the Department to recoup unemployment compensation benefit overpayments
- UC Claimant garnishments
- Foreclosure cases