

CareerSource SW Florida EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: 3rd Quarter

Date of meeting: August 29, 2024

Report prepared by: Yolanda Flores

Local workforce development board contact: Peg Elmore **Date:** September 30, 2024

B. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Industry or Education	Contact Information
Brian Mangan	Lee County Public Schools	Education	2855 Colonial Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33966
Ariel Pechokas	Collier County Public Schools	Education	3702 Estey Ave. Naples, FL 34104
Kristen Vanselow	Florida Gulf Coast University	Education	10501 FGCU Boulevard South Fort Myers, FL 33965
Whitney Rhine	Florida Southwestern State College	Education	8099 College Parkway Fort Myers, FL 33919
Brian Granstra	Charlotte County Public Schools	Education	1455 Education Way, Port Charlotte, FL 33928
Jennifer Thayer	Lee Health	Industry	6630 Orion Drive, Suite 101 Fort Myers, FL 33912
Evelyn Valdes	Lee County Economic Development Council	Industry	2201 Second St. Suite 500 Fort Myers, FL 33901

Michelle Munoz for Jaime Zabala, Jr.	Advanced Hurricane Technology, Inc.	Industry	16501 Old Airport Haul Road Fort Myers, FL 33913
Blanca Beauchamp	Conditioned Air	Industry	3786 Mercantile Avenue Naples, FL 34104
Jennifer Carrasco	Shaw Development, LLC.	Industry	25190 Bernwood Dr. Bonita Springs, FL 34135
Bereniz Bogardus	U.S. Sugar	Industry	111 Ponce de Leon Avenue Clewiston, FL 33440
Kay Tracy	Charlotte County Economic Development Council	Industry	18501 Murdock Circle Port Charlotte, FL 33948
Brian Thomson	RT Moore	Industry	14630 Jetport Loop Fort Myers, FL 33913

B. SUMMARY REPORT

1. Summary analysis of the local labor market based on the industry representative needs and education offerings.

Rob Harris, Executive Director of the Southwest Regional Manufacturers Association (SRMA), provided an overview of the manufacturing landscape in Southwest Florida, highlighting both its challenges and opportunities. While manufacturing represents a smaller portion of the local economy compared to other sectors—constituting around 2.5% of Lee County’s workforce—there are currently about 1,200 manufacturers in the region, which is small compared to other parts of the state. However, manufacturing in Florida as a whole is experiencing rapid growth, with the state recently surpassing New York in the number of manufacturing employers. Florida now boasts 16,533 manufacturing jobs, driven by the sector’s statewide GDP growth.

One of the major challenges Harris pointed out is the workforce shortage, particularly in skilled labor. To address this, SRMA is focused on education initiatives, networking, and advocating for policies to strengthen the local

manufacturing ecosystem. He emphasized the need for better infrastructure and tax reforms to make the region more attractive to manufacturers

2. Information on priority industry sectors and occupations for the local area.

Rob Harris believes that high-tech, higher-wage industries, such as robotics and semiconductors, should be a priority for the area. Lockheed Martin, which operates 25 locations in Florida, has yet to establish a presence in Southwest Florida. This region could become a critical player in sectors such as aerospace manufacturing—where 3% of all parts sent into space are made in Florida.

Aerospace and Defense: Florida is a major player in aerospace manufacturing, with 3% of parts used in space missions made in the state. This sector is focused on advanced technology, requiring jobs like:

- Aerospace engineers
- CNC machinists (who work with computer-controlled machinery)
- Mechanical drafters
- Quality control inspectors

Medical Devices and Equipment: Southwest Florida has a growing industry for medical equipment manufacturing, with companies like Arthrex leading the way. Jobs in demand include:

- Medical equipment operators
- Product assembly technicians
- Biomedical engineers
- Maintenance technicians

Boating and Marine Manufacturing: The region is known for its boat manufacturing, which supports both recreational and commercial marine sectors. Key jobs are:

- Composite fabricators (building boat structures)
- Marine electricians
- Boat builders and repairers
- Marine engine mechanics

Green Energy and Environmental Products: The area is seeing growth in green energy, with companies making components for solar power and other renewable systems. In-demand roles include:

- Electrical technicians
- Solar panel installers
- Green energy equipment assemblers

Harris also highlighted the importance of focusing on rural counties, identifying U.S. Route 27 as a prime corridor for manufacturing development. Florida Commerce has responded by appointing a chief manufacturing officer to facilitate industry growth, and initiatives like Valencia State College's semiconductor program offer a model for developing a full career pathway from high school to university. Harris is coordinating a team from Southwest Florida to visit Valencia and explore how to replicate this model locally. Companies like Shaw are also contributing by providing advanced welding training, but there remains a significant need to build a robust talent pipeline in the region.

3. Information on the status of existing talent pipelines for in-demand occupations.

In Southwest Florida, the manufacturing industry is experiencing a talent shortage, with a significant skills gap in the workforce. Companies are actively looking for workers skilled in advanced manufacturing techniques like welding, CNC machining, and other specialized areas. However, the existing workforce doesn't fully meet these demands, leading to a focus on training and reskilling programs. Harris highlighted the importance of focusing on rural counties, identifying U.S. Route 27 as a prime corridor for manufacturing development. Florida Commerce has responded by appointing a chief manufacturing officer to facilitate industry growth, and initiatives like Valencia State College's semiconductor program offer a model for developing a full career pathway from high school to university. Harris is coordinating a team from Southwest Florida to visit Valencia and explore how to replicate this model locally. Companies like Shaw are also contributing by providing advanced welding training, but there remains a significant need to build a robust talent pipeline in the region.

CareerSource Southwest Florida and local manufacturers are working to address this by promoting apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Programs like those offered by Shaw Development, which provides advanced welding training, are prime examples of efforts to boost the local talent pool. Additionally, the Southwest Regional Manufacturers Association (SRMA) plays a key role in strengthening the talent pipeline by collaborating with local businesses and educational institutions to identify workforce needs and advocate for more robust training programs. One such initiative is the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP), which helps veterans, especially those facing significant barriers to employment, transition into civilian jobs. Vernon Pearsy, a DVOP specialist, outlined how this program offers personalized services like career counseling, resume development, interview preparation, and job training. Since many DVOP specialists are veterans themselves, they understand the unique

challenges veterans face and help them translate their military experience into civilian careers. This program is part of CareerSource Florida's broader mission to support veterans, particularly those with disabilities, as they reintegrate into the workforce.

High schools in SW Florida are also expanding manufacturing programs. For example, Port Charlotte High School offers an advanced manufacturing program, while South Fort Myers High School provides a welding program.

Cape Coral Technical College

- N/A

Charlotte Technical College

- N/A

Collier Adult Education

- Intro to Manufacturing IET

Florida SouthWestern State College

- Science and Engineering Technology

Fort Myers Technical College

- Biomedical Equipment Repair Technology
- Electronic Technology
- Major Appliance and Refrigeration Technician
- Mechatronic Technology
- Welding Technology

Immokalee Technical College

- CNC Production Specialist
- Machining

Lorenzo Walker Technical College

- Welding Technology

ATA College

- N/A

Florida Gulf Coast University

- Bioengineering
- Biotechnology

Nova Southeastern University

- N/A

Keiser

- N/A