

CareerSource SW Florida EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: Quarter 4, 2024

Date of meeting: November 21, 2024

Report prepared by: Yolanda Flores

Local workforce development board contact: Peg Elmore **Date:** December 9, 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
Mike Swindle/ Jennie Goffee	Hendry County School District	Education	300 W Cowboy Way Labelle, FL 33935
Whitney Rhine	Florida Southwestern State College	Education	8099 College Parkway Fort Myers, FL 33919
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
Jaime Zabala, Jr.	Advanced Hurricane Technology, Inc.	Industry	16501 Old Airport Haul Road Fort Myers, FL 33913

Charles Litteral for Blanca Beauchamp	Conditioned Air	Industry	3786 Mercantile Avenue Naples, FL 34104
Jennifer Carrasco	Shaw Development, LLC.	Industry	25190 Bernwood Dr. Bonita Springs, FL 34135
Dr. Beth Barfield	Glades County School District	Education	Post Office Box 459 Moore Haven, FL 33471
Kay Tracy	Charlotte County Economic Development	Industry	18501 Murdock Circle Port Charlotte, FL 33948
Brian Thompson	RT Moore	Industry	14630 Jetport Loop Ft. Myers, FL 33913

B. SUMMARY REPORT

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

The construction industry is a vital part of Southwest Florida's economy, accounting for 12.7% of the regional workforce with 51,571 jobs in 2018, and contributing \$2.5 billion, or 13.7%, of total wages. However, the region faces notable workforce challenges and gaps in education and training offerings.

According to **Mike Biskie, Human Resources Director for B&I Contractors and Chairman of the Workforce Development Board of Southwest Florida**, there is a significant shortage of skilled workers, particularly **plumbers, electricians, and HVAC technicians**. Earnings in Southwest Florida lag behind national averages by \$5 to \$6 per hour, making it harder to attract and retain talent. While B&I Contractors has added 330 employees in the past 10 months, high turnover remains an issue, prompting expectations for wage adjustments.

Challenges in attracting high school students and women to construction careers further exacerbate workforce shortages. Educational programs exist at

institutions like South Fort Myers High School, Port Charlotte Technical College, Florida SouthWestern State College and Florida Gulf Coast University, but they often struggle to run effectively due to a lack of available instructors. Additionally, language barriers pose challenges, as roughly half the workforce speaks Spanish, while training materials are typically in English. Also, it is difficult to attract competent certified instructors who make more money in industry than they do teaching.

The region is experiencing strong demand for commercial construction, driven by projects such as new hospitals and Amazon's warehouse. Companies are addressing workforce gaps by creating in-house training programs.

2. Information on priority industry sectors and occupations for the local area.
(Provide summary)

The construction sector in Southwest Florida encompasses a variety of roles, including:

- Skilled Trades:
 - *Carpenters*: Involved in building frameworks and structures.
 - *Electricians*: Responsible for installing and maintaining electrical systems.
 - *Plumbers*: Specialize in installing and repairing piping systems.
 - *HVAC Technicians*: Focus on heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.
- General Laborers: Assist with various tasks on construction sites, providing essential support to skilled trades.
- Project Management:
 - *Construction Managers*: Oversee project planning, coordination, and execution.
 - *Site Supervisors*: Manage daily operations on construction sites.
- Heavy Equipment Operators: Operate machinery such as bulldozers, cranes, and excavators.

Industry Outlook

The construction industry in Southwest Florida is poised for continued growth, supported by:

- Population Growth: Increasing demand for residential and commercial infrastructure.
- Economic Development: Ongoing and planned projects in hospitality, healthcare, and retail sectors.

This expansion underscores the need for a skilled workforce to meet the region's construction demands.

3. Information on the status of existing talent pipelines for in-demand occupations. (Provide summary)

Christine Sardina, Executive Director, Tri-County Apprenticeship provided an overview of her organization. The organization collaborates closely with contractors in the construction industry and partners with Fort Myers Technical College to develop a skilled workforce.

Tri-County Apprenticeship sponsors all high school construction programs in Lee County and works with Junior Achievement to establish a pre-apprenticeship program. They actively engage with high schools, making connections through visits and career days, and also reach out to veterans to promote opportunities. Additionally, they collaborate with CareerSource Southwest Florida to expand awareness of apprenticeship programs.

They also sponsor an Electrical Pre-Apprenticeship at Donna J. Beasley Technical High School. Sardina emphasizes the importance of placing apprenticeships at the forefront of workforce development strategies, noting that when implemented effectively, these programs are highly successful in building a qualified talent pipeline.

Lauren Sage, Apprenticeship Navigator, CareerSource Southwest Florida, provided an overview of apprenticeship initiatives in the region. In her pivotal role, she collaborates with local businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations to develop and expand Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) tailored to industry needs. Apprenticeship lengths vary by occupation, and Lauren highlighted the numerous benefits for both employers and apprentices, emphasizing the value of these programs in addressing workforce demands.

Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW):

FSW offers an Associate in Science in Architectural Design and Construction Technology as well as Civil Engineering Technology. These programs are supported by funding opportunities such as the Open Door Grant and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, which help students pay for the training. They have also established scholarship for students who articulate from the technical colleges.

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU):

FGCU provides a comprehensive range of programs, including:

- Essentials of Construction Blueprint Reading: A 10-week course for individuals looking to enhance their understanding of construction plans.

- **Construction Management Course:** Another 10-week program aimed at advancing knowledge and skills in construction management.
- **Degree Programs:** Offers a Master of Science in Engineering with a specialization in Construction Management and a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management.
- **Continuing Education Courses:** Includes online, self-paced options such as Residential Electrician Certification, HVAC/R Technician Certification (available in English and Spanish), and AutoCAD Certification Training.

Hendry County:

Postsecondary programs have expanded significantly, with new offerings in plumbing, welding, and HVAC training to meet local industry needs.

Lee County:

- **Pre-Apprenticeship Program:** A new program at Lehigh Senior High School aims to enroll 25 students initially, with a long-term goal of establishing pre-apprenticeship programs in every high school in the county.
- **Blueprint for Professional Success:** A program designed to equip students with essential career skills and knowledge.

Recommendations

1. **Conduct a Regional Wage Study:**
CareerSource Southwest Florida should undertake a comprehensive study to compare wages for construction and related trades in Southwest Florida with those in other states. This would provide valuable insights to address wage gaps and improve talent retention.
2. **Enhance Construction Education Programs:**
Encourage school districts to prioritize and expand construction-focused programs to cultivate a skilled workforce and meet the region's growing industry demands.
3. **Expand Integrated Education and Training (IET) Programs:**
Continue developing IET programs that enable adult education students to simultaneously learn English or obtain their GED while acquiring technical skills in high-demand trades.
4. **Research and Promote Instructor Recruitment:**
Conduct research on certification requirements for career and technical education (CTE) instructors and launch a targeted marketing campaign to attract nontraditional teachers and instructors, including industry professionals looking to transition into education.



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