

CareerSource SW Florida EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: 3rd Quarter

Date of meeting: August 27, 2026

Report prepared by: Yolanda Flores

Local workforce development board contact: Peg Elmore **Date:** August 27, 2026

B. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Industry or Education	Contact Information
Matt Bredenkamp	Lee County Public Schools	Education	2855 Colonial Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33966
Edwards Matthews	Lee County Public Schools	Education	2855 Colonial Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33966
Angela Tackett	E2 Companies	Industry	8901 Quality Road Bonita Springs, FL 34135
Jon Castro	B&I Contractors	Industry	2701 Prince Street Fort Myers, FL 33916
Maria Vstola-Cirillo	Charlotte County Economic Development	Industry	18501 Murdock Circle, Suite 302 Port Charlotte, FL 33948
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

Kelly Thawley	Florida Gulf Coast University	Education	10501 FGCU Boulevard South Fort Myers, FL 33965
Whitney Rhyne	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
Blanca Beauchamp	Conditioned Air	Industry	3786 Mercantile Avenue Naples, FL 34104
Rebecca Sandholdt	CareerSource Southwest Florida	Workforce	6800 Shoppes at Plantation Drive, Suite 170 Fort Myers, FL 33912
Peg Elmore	CareerSource Southwest Florida	Workforce	6800 Shoppes at Plantation Drive, Suite 170 Fort Myers, FL 33912
Tatum Walker	Lee County Economic Development	Industry	2201 Second St., Suite 500 Fort Myers, FL 33901
Tori Cunningham	Family Health Center of SW Florida	Industry	2232 Grand Ave. Fort Myers, FL 33901

B. SUMMARY REPORT

The Education and Industry Consortium met on August 27, 2026, to review its vision, connect the 2026-2028 Southwest Florida Workforce Strategic Framework to the consortium's responsibilities, and establish an employer-led approach for turning regional workforce priorities into measurable action. The discussion focused on a shared goal, industry workgroups, talent pipeline development, accountability measures, and the next steps required to move from planning to implementation.

Consortium Vision and Strategic Framework

Chair Jennifer Thayer reviewed the consortium's vision of serving as a catalyst for collaboration between industry and education in Southwest Florida. The vision emphasizes helping individuals gain the skills, opportunities, and career pathways needed to succeed while supporting business innovation, growth, and long-term regional prosperity. The consortium is expected to provide the workforce board with practical information that can improve opportunities for both employers and job seekers.

Peg Elmore provided an overview of the 2026-2028 workforce strategic framework and discussed how the local plan connects to broader state and regional priorities. Two priorities

that she emphasized was Apprenticeships and Integrated Education and Training. CareerSource has a dedicated apprenticeship navigator and is looking to become an Apprenticeship Sponsor. Members emphasized that business and education partners must have meaningful opportunities to provide input before the plan is finalized. A copy of the plan will be distributed for review, and the local plan is scheduled to be presented to the CareerSource Southwest Florida Board of Directors in September. The group also discussed the regional planning component being developed with workforce partners in neighboring areas.

The framework calls for deeper engagement around a limited number of priority occupations rather than broad discussion without follow-through. Members noted that industry-specific conversations should address career pathways, credentials, apprenticeships, work-based learning, and the alignment of training with actual employer demand. The group also stressed the importance of integrating available workforce data, using dashboards to track outcomes, and remaining flexible as technology and artificial intelligence change jobs and skill requirements.

Shared Goal and Operating Model

The proposed shared goal is to build a coordinated, employer-led regional workforce system that increases the supply of skilled talent for Southwest Florida's highest-demand industries. The consortium will provide the common structure, while industry workgroups will translate the goal into specific action in healthcare, education, manufacturing, construction, and logistics.

The proposed operating model includes three connected initiatives:

- Demand: Identify the top three priority occupations in each industry, quantify talent gaps, establish a common baseline, and identify the barriers that most limit the workforce pipeline.
- Talent pipeline alignment: Map existing education and training pathways, credentials, and capacity; address curriculum and experience gaps; and expand career exposure, internships, apprenticeships, and other earn-and-learn opportunities.
- Activation and accountability: Turn priorities into employer commitments, pilot projects, and measurable outcomes with named owners, timelines, and quarterly reporting.

Performance Measures and Timeline

The proposed primary measure is the percentage of priority occupations with an activated talent pipeline. An activated pipeline must include validated employer demand, a defined education or training pathway, documented employer commitments, and a method for tracking participation, placements, retention, and advancement. The proposed 12-month target is for at least 80 percent of each workgroup's top three occupations to have an activated pipeline plan, with at least one pipeline in each industry producing placements or hires.

The proposed schedule begins with forming the workgroups, naming co-leads, selecting priority occupations, and establishing baseline data during the first 30 days. During days 31 through 90, each workgroup will validate demand, identify root causes, select measures, and prepare a 90-day action plan. Workgroups will then launch one or two priority interventions, track results, address barriers, expand partnerships, and determine which efforts should be scaled, revised, or discontinued. Monthly workgroup meetings and quarterly consortium scorecard reviews were proposed, although members discussed maintaining flexibility so meetings remain focused and manageable.

Discussion Highlights

- Members emphasized that each workgroup should be led by employers, with education and training partners serving across workgroups as needed to align programs, credentials, and student preparation with industry demand.
- The group discussed the need to distinguish entry-level occupations from pathways that lead to higher-skilled positions and advancement. Career pathways should show how individuals can enter an industry, gain experience and credentials, and progress over time.
- Apprenticeship and internship opportunities were identified as key goals. Members noted that successful models already exist, but additional employers may need help understanding the benefits, administrative requirements, available funding, and expectations for participation.
- Members recommended creating an inventory of available education and training programs and credentials, including credentials that may not yet appear on an eligible provider list when a provider is actively pursuing recognition or approval.
- The group discussed establishing consistent expectations for employer participation, including interviews, placements, hiring, work-based learning, and investment in employee training. Members also noted the importance of identifying the right employers and community partners for each workgroup.
- Existing resources should be used before new tools are developed. Members referenced available career pathway materials and recommended identifying gaps, certifications, and open positions that are not already captured.
- The Horizon Council and other economic development partners were identified as potential collaborators for employer outreach and for reaching business leaders who can support the workgroups.

Next Steps

- Distribute the presentation and strategic plan materials to consortium members.
- Organize workgroups for healthcare, education, manufacturing, construction, and logistics, and identify an executive sponsor and employer or education co-lead for each group.
- Identify each workgroup's top priority occupations, assemble baseline data, and begin documenting talent gaps and root causes.
- Develop a 90-day action plan for each workgroup that identifies interventions, responsible parties, employer commitments, needed resources, and measurable outcomes.
- Create a shared scorecard and report progress to the full consortium each quarter.