

LWDB 20, CareerSource Research Coast (CSRC) Workforce Readiness Taskforce QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: Quarter 2, 2025

Date of meeting: June 5, 2025

Report prepared by: Christina Coble, CSRC Business Services Manager

Local workforce development board contact: Christina Coble, Business Services Manager

Date 06/18/2025

B. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Industry or Education Organization	Contact Information
Aliesha Seitz	St. Lucie Public Schools	St. Lucie Public Schools	772-449-5559 Vashitie.seitz@stlucieschools.org
Lana Barros	Martin County School District	Martin County School District	772-219-1200 barros1@martinschools.org
Prashanth Pilly	Indian River State College	Indian River State College	772-462-7212 ppilly@irsc.edu
Christi Shields	Indian River County School District	Indian River County School District	772-564-5006 christi.shields@indianriverschools.org
Anita Fischer (guest)	Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County	Economic Development Council of St. Lucie Council of St. Lucie County	772.324.2014 ext 204 afischer@youredc.com
Keith Flynn (guest)	Daher	Manufacturing	772-220-5300 kflynn@us.daher.com

Alfred Guzman (guest)	Piper Aircraft	Manufacturing	alfred.guzman@piper.com 772-299-2120
Shannon Armstrong (guest)	Pursuit Aero	Manufacturing	SArmstrong@pursuitaero.com 772-486-3263
Enrico Mattiazzi	IM Group/Inkmakers	Manufacturing	emattiazzi@im-group.com 248-729-1418
Jamie Duplantis	A1 Global Holdings	Manufacturing	772-409-1011 ext. 259 Jamie.duplantis@a1globalholdings.com
Christina Coble	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	
Jennifer Eimann	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	

B. SUMMARY REPORT

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

This quarter's meeting focused on the manufacturing sector, delving more deeply into the needs and challenges of this industry.

Christina Coble, CSRC Business Services Manager, presented regional manufacturing labor market data to provide context for the discussion. The LMI examines manufacturing across the three-county Treasure Coast region (Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties) for the period 2024-2028.

Key Employment Statistics (2024)

- Total jobs: 12,673 manufacturing positions
- Growth projection: 9% growth through 2028 (compared to 3.5% nationally)
- Average earnings: \$75,001 per job (above-average wage for the region)
- Business locations: 750 payroll manufacturing companies

- Unemployment rate: Very low, approaching full employment
- Growth Outlook

The region significantly outperforms broader growth projections:

- Regional growth: 9% (2024-2028)
- State growth: 5.7% (Florida)
- National growth: 3.5%

Growth continues beyond 2028 through 2035, though at a slightly moderated pace.

Top Manufacturing Occupations

1. Assemblers and fabricators
2. Supervisors of production and operating workers
3. Fiberglass laminators and fabricators (marine industry focus)
4. Industrial engineers
5. Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers

Workforce Demographics

Gender Distribution:

- Male: 72%
- Female: 28% (challenging traditional manufacturing stereotypes)

Age Breakdown:

- Under 44: 45% of the workforce
- 55 and older: 30% (approaching retirement age)
- Age distribution: Relatively even across age ranges, indicating consistent talent recruitment

Race and Ethnicity:

- White: 60.9%
- Hispanic: 19.5%
- Black: 16.3%
- Other: Remaining percentage

Economic Impact

Gross regional product: \$1 billion in manufacturing earnings (2024)

- Manufacturing companies range from small operations in industrial parks to larger facilities
- Significant economic contributors are often overlooked due to low visibility

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

Manufacturing represents a vital and growing sector for the Treasure Coast, offering above-average wages and strong career prospects. The industry's projected growth rate nearly triples the national average, making it an attractive career pathway for workforce development initiatives. The sector demonstrates diversity in both company size and workforce composition, with a healthy age distribution suggesting sustainable long-term growth.

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

As planned, a panel discussion was conducted regarding the current talent pipeline in Manufacturing within the local area and included both WRT members and guest panelists from local manufacturers who were invited to participate. The panel and WRT members discussed the biggest challenges in workforce retention within the Manufacturing sector. The following is a summary of the key workforce challenges discussed by the panel, including guest industry experts Shannon Armstrong, Enrico Mattiazzi, Keith Fynn, Jamie Duplantis, and Al Guzman.

Primary Workforce Challenges in Manufacturing

The panel discussed that the industry faces two critical staffing issues that create ongoing operational difficulties.

- Challenges in finding and retaining skilled workers in manufacturing.
- The impact of local economic conditions on workforce readiness and employment opportunities.

Talent Acquisition and Retention Strategies

Shannon Armstrong raised the challenge of enhancing talent acquisition in different regions. Jamie Duplantis shared insights from her diverse industry experience, advocating early engagement through initiatives like summer internships and stressing the importance of leadership development for employee retention. Enrico Mattiazzi added that their current challenge lies in defining talent, focusing on soft skills and the desire for growth rather than just technical competencies.

Updates on Internship Programs and Student Opportunities

Aliesha Seitz provided an overview of the Career Technical Education programs in St. Lucie Public Schools, emphasizing the diverse opportunities available for students, including pre-apprenticeships and dual enrollment programs. She shared a success story of a student who is now pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering and is seeking internship opportunities, underscoring the importance of community involvement in these initiatives.

Workforce Challenges and Training Initiatives

Al Guzman shared his experiences as a Training and Development Manager at Piper Aircraft, noting the difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled workers. He pointed out that many applicants are unprepared for the physically demanding and compliance-heavy nature of manufacturing jobs. He pointed out that many applicants are unprepared for the physically demanding and compliance-heavy nature of manufacturing jobs. Additionally, he mentioned the impact of housing and transportation challenges on employee attendance and job retention.

Internships and Workforce Challenges

Shannon Armstrong shared insights on the internship program at Pursuit, noting that each intern posting attracted over 150 applicants. While she expressed excitement about hiring local talent, she also pointed out the considerable time and effort needed to train interns, which can be a burden on current employees. Additionally, she mentioned the difficulty in convincing business unit leaders to take on interns due to their existing workload.

Addressing Life Skills and Workforce Readiness

Shannon Armstrong emphasized the lack of life skills among new entrants to the workforce, attributing part of the issue to the impact of COVID-19 on education.

Christina Coble mentioned that local school districts are making efforts to

incorporate soft skills into their curricula, although the results will not be immediate.

Lana Barros raised questions about the transferability of skills taught to interns and the need for better connections between industry and educational programs. She stated that Career and Technical education leaders recognize a critical disconnect between student preparation and industry expectations.

Career and Technical education programs need direct industry input to incorporate both technical skills and workplace behavioral expectations into curricula, ensuring graduates understand "real-world" professional standards before entering the workforce.

Summer Internship Program and Community Collaboration

Jamie Duplantis pointed out the need for collaboration among HR representatives and community partners to enhance workforce readiness.

There are promising solutions and partnerships. Several strategic approaches show potential for addressing these retention challenges. While current regulations prevent hiring 16–17-year-olds immediately, early exposure to manufacturing careers could yield substantial returns by building local talent pipelines and community connections that encourage workers to remain in the area long-term.

Workforce Readiness and Perceptions of Manufacturing Careers

Enrico Mattiazzi highlighted the need for industries to attract young talent by demonstrating that manufacturing careers can be rewarding and engaging. He pointed out that the modern manufacturing environment vastly differs from previous decades. Al Guzman shared his observations that young workers often come in with high expectations shaped by social media, only to find the reality of the job less glamorous than anticipated, leading to frustration and a desire to leave.

Workforce Development Initiatives and Community Engagement

Aliesha Seitz discussed the growth and opportunities in workforce readiness, urging businesses to engage with students to overcome misconceptions. Career and Technical education programs need direct industry input to incorporate both technical skills and workplace behavioral expectations into curricula, ensuring graduates understand "real-world" professional standards before entering the workforce.

Christina Coble discussed the manufacturing boot camp in Indian River County,

where high school students are learning employability skills and touring local manufacturers. Both speakers stressed the importance of continuing to build connections between businesses and educational programs.

Manufacturing Workforce Challenges: A Comprehensive View from Piper Aircraft:

Al Guzman shared the following workforce development perspective. Drawing from military aviation experience, Piper Aircraft has developed insights into the complex, interconnected nature of manufacturing workforce challenges. Despite successfully transitioning skilled military personnel into aircraft manufacturing roles, the company faces significant obstacles in developing local talent pipelines.

- **Expectation Misalignment and Geographic Barriers**

New manufacturing workers often arrive unprepared for the industry's demanding realities. Many lack exposure to manufacturing's fast-paced, compliance-heavy environment and underestimate the physical demands. This expectation gap creates immediate retention challenges, compounded by practical barriers including housing affordability and transportation limitations. Employees commute from as far as Stuart and Melbourne to Vero Beach, creating financial strain that contradicts their income expectations and impacts attendance reliability.

- **Training Program Development and Career vs. Job Mentality**

Piper has invested in comprehensive training programs that convert unskilled local workers into aircraft manufacturing specialists, leveraging military training expertise. However, success requires shifting the worker's mindset from job-seeking to career-building. The company emphasizes that while jobs are plentiful, careers require mutual investment between employer and employee.

Leadership Development as Retention Strategy Summary

Beyond technical training, organizations must prioritize developing leadership, supervisory, and management skills. This addresses both the second shift staffing challenges and broader retention issues. Effective employee engagement requires more than competitive compensation—workers need strong leadership, peer support, and clear career development paths. Companies must model the behaviors they expect and create environments where employees have compelling reasons to stay beyond financial incentives.

The key insight is that retention strategies must combine early community engagement, comprehensive leadership development, and workplace cultures that provide meaningful career progression opportunities rather than relying solely on competitive compensation packages.