

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

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: Quarter 4, 2025

Date of meeting: December 4, 2025

Report prepared by: Christina Coble, CSRC Business Services Manager

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

Date 12/31/2025

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 barros@martinschools.org
Linda Fitzpatrick	Keiser University	Keiser University	772-398-9990 lfitzpatrick@keiseruniversity.edu
Christi Shields	Indian River County School District	Indian River County School District	772-564-5006 christi.shields@indianriverschools.org
Karen Giovengo	HCA Healthcare	Healthcare	Karen.giovengo@hcahealthcare.com
Lorna Landher (guest)	Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital	Healthcare	Landhe2@ccf.org
Victoria McMillian (guest)	Cabana at Jensen Dunes	Healthcare	vmcmillian@conviviallife.org

Ann Hubbard (guest)	Indian River State College	Healthcare Education	ahubbard@irsc.edu
Maureen Harry (guest)	Keiser University	Healthcare Education	Mharry@keiseruniversity.edu
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
Ashley Cummings (guest)	Cabana at Jensen Dunes	Healthcare	acummings@conviviallife.org
Leslie Haviland (guest)	Cleveland Clinic Martin Health	Healthcare	havilal@ccf.org
Jim Brann (guest)	The Porch Factory	Skilled Trades	admin@diyscreenroom.com
Deb Frazier (guest)	Treasure Coast Builder's Association	Skilled Trades	deb@treasurecoastba.com
Brian Bauer	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	bbauer@careersourcerc.com
Tracey McMorris	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	tmcmorris@careersourcerc.com
Christina Coble	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	ccoble@careersourcerc.com
Dawn Riccardi	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	driccardi@careersourcerc.com
Kurt Hawker	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	khawker@careersourcerc.com
Rona Scott	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	rscott@careersourcerc.com
Mitch Kloorfain	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	mkloorfain@careersourcerc.com

Jennifer Eimann	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	jeimann@careersourcerc.com
-----------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------

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 healthcare sector, delving more deeply into the needs and challenges of this industry.

Christina Coble, CSRC Business Services Manager, presented regional healthcare labor market data to provide context for the discussion. The LMI examines healthcare data across the three-county Treasure Coast region (Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties). As one of the largest and fastest-growing employment sectors in our area, healthcare represents a critical component of both our workforce and economic development. This analysis provided essential insights for workforce planning, career counseling, economic development initiatives, and strategic planning for healthcare organizations and educational institutions.

Compensation Analysis

Average annual wages within the sector exceed \$64,000, positioning healthcare among the higher-paying industries in our region. This competitive compensation level makes healthcare careers particularly attractive for workforce development initiatives and career pathway programs. These wages support strong economic multiplier effects throughout the region, as healthcare workers contribute significantly to local consumer spending and economic vitality.

Growth Trajectory

The sector demonstrates robust average annual employment change that outpaces national growth rates. This accelerated growth pattern reflects several factors: our region's aging population demographics, expansion of healthcare facilities and services, increasing demand for healthcare services, and the sector's resilience during economic fluctuations. The sustained growth trajectory suggests continued employment opportunities and career stability for individuals entering or advancing within the healthcare field.

County-Level Employment Analysis

Healthcare employment shows remarkable balance across our three-county region, with each county serving as a significant healthcare employment center:

- **St. Lucie County:** With over 16,000 healthcare employees, St. Lucie County hosts major healthcare facilities and serves as a regional healthcare hub. The county's larger population base supports diverse healthcare services including acute care hospitals, specialty medical practices, rehabilitation facilities, mental health services, and long-term care facilities.
- **Martin County:** Also employing over 16,000 healthcare workers, Martin County demonstrates healthcare employment levels comparable to St. Lucie County despite its smaller population. This suggests a higher concentration of healthcare services relative to population size, potentially indicating the county's role as a destination for healthcare services drawing patients from surrounding areas.
- **Indian River County:** With approximately 12,000 healthcare employees, Indian River County maintains substantial healthcare employment that supports its population and contributes significantly to the local economy. The county's healthcare sector likely includes a mix of hospital systems, physician practices, home healthcare agencies, and senior living facilities.

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

The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector employs over 44,000 individuals across St. Lucie, Martin, and Indian River counties, making it one of the region's largest employment sectors. This substantial workforce represents 17.3% of total regional employment, significantly exceeding the national benchmark of 15.3%. This 2-percentage-point difference indicates that healthcare plays a more prominent role in our local economy compared to the broader U.S. employment landscape.

A comprehensive understanding of healthcare sector occupations reveals significant diversity beyond traditional clinical roles. While this analysis confirms that healthcare practitioners and clinical support staff comprise approximately 60% of the workforce, the remaining 40% represents substantial opportunities in supporting roles that are equally essential to healthcare delivery.

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 healthcare within the local area. The panel brought together representatives from both the education and employment sides of healthcare and were welcomed to discuss workforce development challenges and opportunities in the healthcare sector.

Panelists:

- Lorna Landher: Director of HR Services, Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital
- Leslie Haviland: Project Manager, Cleveland Clinic Center for Workforce

Development

- Ann Hubbard: Dean of Health Science, Indian River State College
- Maureen Harry: BSN Nursing Program Director, Keiser University
- Ashley Cummings: Executive Director, The Cabana at Jensen Dunes
- Victoria McMillan: HR Manager, The Cabana at Jensen Dunes

Below is a summary of the main points presented by the panel:

Critical Staffing Needs Beyond High-Volume Roles

The panel emphasized that workforce analysis must consider both supply and demand ratios, not just overall staffing numbers. Several specialized healthcare positions face severe shortages despite lower visibility in traditional staffing reports:

- Medical Laboratory Technicians: Only 15 graduates annually in the region despite multiple openings
- Respiratory Therapists: Identified as one of the hardest positions to recruit nationally
- Radiographers: Limited by small cohort sizes even with program expansions
- Dental Hygienists: 10 graduates serving approximately 200 dentists
- Speech-Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists: Nearest training programs located in Orlando and St. Augustine, creating pipeline challenges

These foundational roles are essential for clinical operations, as nurses and other providers cannot function effectively without this support infrastructure.

The Critical Thinking and Soft Skills Gap

Healthcare organizations report that new graduates are increasingly struggling with real-world application despite academic preparation. Key concerns include:

- Clinical Freeze Response: Some new graduates experience paralysis when facing actual patient situations versus simulated environments
- Professionalism Deficits: Basic workplace behaviors previously considered inherent now require explicit instruction
- Social Skills Decline: COVID-19's lasting impact on interpersonal development and emotional regulation

Proposed Solutions: Establishing closer collaboration between academia and clinical settings through faculty shadowing, participation in hospital huddles, exposure to new technologies, and real-life patient scenario training.

Workforce Readiness and Early Exposure

The challenge extends beyond higher education into K-12 preparation. Current initiatives include:

- Summer Internship Program: 51 high school students placed in 25 local businesses for hands-on experience

- Eighth Grade Career Exploration: Recent event featuring major healthcare systems providing direct student engagement
- Identified Need: Scaling from 100 students to 500+ to match graduating class sizes

The consensus recognizes this as both an educational and home environment issue requiring long-term, multi-stakeholder solutions.

Innovative Talent Development Strategies

Educational Access

Indian River State College Promise Program: Provides tuition-free two-year degrees to qualifying high school graduates in the four-county area, successfully producing 19-year-old respiratory therapy graduates and expanding the career pipeline.

Primary Departure Factors

- **Burnout:** Insufficient emotional regulation tools and coping mechanisms for traumatic or stressful situations
- **Administrative Burden:** System inefficiencies that detract from patient care
- **Generational Shifts:** Younger workforce prioritizes rapid advancement and career mobility over long-term loyalty
- **Economic Pressures:** Housing costs, interest rates, and cost of living challenge even seemingly adequate salaries
- **Management Quality:** Easy job mobility enables quick exits from poor leadership situations

Innovative Retention Approach

One private care organization achieved higher retention by applying the same core values internally that they expect caregivers to provide externally, treating staff as clients rather than just employees.

Technology and Future Trends

While AI was acknowledged as a hot topic, the discussion focused primarily on immediate workforce challenges. The consensus recognizes that technological advancement must be balanced with human workforce development, particularly as demographics shift toward an aging population requiring more healthcare services alongside an aging clinical workforce.

Strategic Implications

- **For Workforce Development:** This data supports healthcare career pathway programs, training initiatives for high-demand occupations, and recruitment efforts targeting diverse populations.
- **For Education:** Institutions can use this information for program planning, curriculum development, and career services aligned with regional employment needs.

- **For Economic Development:** The sector's strength and growth trajectory inform business attraction, retention strategies, and infrastructure planning.
- **For Healthcare Employers:** Labor market intelligence supports workforce planning, competitive analysis, and talent development strategies.

Collaboration Imperative

Success requires partnerships across healthcare organizations, educational institutions, workforce development agencies, and community stakeholders. No single entity can solve these complex, interconnected challenges independently.