

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

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: Quarter 1, 2026

Date of meeting: March 5, 2026

Report prepared by: Christina Coble, CSRC Business Services Manager

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

Date 03/25/2026

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 barrosl@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
Javon Welch	Armelilni Express	Transportation and Logistics	jwelch@armellini.com
Jennifer Williams	Treasure Coast Builder's Association	Skilled Trades	workforce@treasurecoastba.com
Leslie Haviland	Cleveland Clinic Martin Health	Healthcare	havilal@ccf.org

Mitchell Hall (guest)	Wal-Mart Distribution	Transportation and logistics	Mitchell.hall@walmart.com
Mike Lucci (guest)	Wal-Mart Distribution	Transportation and logistics	Mike.lucci@walmart.com
Jimmy Kern	Indian River State College	Education (Transportation and logistics)	jkern@irsc.edu
Tracey McMorris	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	tmcmorris@careersourcerc.com
Christina Coble	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	ccoble@careersourcerc.com
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Kurt Hawker	CareerSource Research Coast	CareerSource Research Coast	khawker@careersourcerc.com
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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 transportation and logistics sector, delving more deeply into the needs and challenges of this industry.

Christina Coble, CSRC Business Services Manager, presented regional transportation and logistics labor market data to provide context for the discussion. The LMI examines transportation and logistics industry data across the three-county Treasure Coast region (Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties). As one of the fastest-growing employment sectors in our area, transportation and logistics 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.

Industry Growth

The local area is growing at nearly double the national rate in transportation and warehousing, with more growth expected as new facilities come online. The sector represents 3.8% of local employment vs. 5.1% nationally — currently below average but projected to rise.

Wages:

- Local average wage: **\$50,620** vs. national **\$66,6**
- Local wage growth over 10 years: **1.1%** vs. national **2.7%**
- This was flagged as a concern, though increased competition for talent is expected to drive wages up.

Top Occupations Locally:

1. Heavy & tractor-trailer truck drivers (1,375)
2. Laborers, freight, stock & material movers
3. Light truck drivers, stockers, order fillers
4. Postal service mail carriers
5. Total sector employment approaches 10,000 locally
6. Also includes less obvious roles: office/admin support, business/finance, management, and engineering

County Breakdown (2024)

- St. Lucie County: 6,308 employed
- Martin County: 1,935
- Indian River County: 1,436

Employer Types

- Majority private employers; 1,570 self-employed (including independent truckers); 919 federal government

Establishments & GDP

- 536 transportation/warehousing establishments in 2024, up from 364 ten years prior
- Sector contributed \$0.9 billion to local GDP (2.8% of local industry share), up 7.4% annually over 10 years

Forecast

Annual growth projected at 1.6%, but likely higher given local development trends.

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

The Transportation and Logistics sector employs approximately 10,000 individuals across St. Lucie, Martin, and Indian River counties, making it one of the region's larger employment sectors. This is a rapidly growing sector within the LWDB, with significant, large employers entering the market during the past several years.

A comprehensive understanding of the transportation sector occupations reveals significant diversity beyond traditional roles. While this analysis confirms that CDL drivers and freight/materials movers comprise a large segment of the workforce, there are additional significant opportunities available in office/admin support, business/finance, management, and engineering within the sector.

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

Panelists:

- Mitch Hall: General Manager, Walmart Distribution Center, Fort Pierce
- Mike Lucci: General Transportation Manager, Walmart Distribution Center, Fort Pierce
- Javon Welch: Director of Talent Acquisition, Armellini Express Lines
- Lizette Rosa: School Director, Sage Truck Driving Schools, Fort Pierce
- Jimmy Kern: CDL Program Manager, Indian River State College

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

Most Urgent Workforce Needs:

Over-the-Road (OTR) Truck Drivers

- Many CDL graduates seek local driving roles, but the greatest regional demand — and highest compensation — is in over-the-road trucking.
- OTR driving involves extended time away from home and must be framed honestly as a lifestyle commitment, not just a job.
- Ideal recruits include retirees or single individuals who are financially motivated and flexible with personal schedules.

School Bus Drivers

- High demand exists across public schools, charter schools, and prep schools, but wages of \$16–\$17/hour remain a significant deterrent.
- IRSC offers a CDL Class B program serving county employees, GO Line (Indian River County transit) applicants, and those seeking positions with distribution companies.
- High turnover is a persistent challenge for school districts.

Youth Outreach & Early Career Exposure:

- Eighth Grade Industry Experience (Treasure Coast EDC / TCC)
- In partnership with the school district and Boys & Girls Clubs, a regional eighth grade industry exploration program drew nearly 800 students last year.
- Walmart's distribution center participated, giving students a firsthand look at logistics careers — generating strong enthusiasm.
- High School Internships
- Walmart's "Share the Road" Program: Certified driver trainers bring a full tractor-trailer to school campuses to educate newly licensed teen drivers on road-sharing safety. The program also introduces students to trucking as a viable career, with drivers discussing real-world benefits and lifestyle considerations.

Growing the Pipeline — Not Redistributing It:

Panelists stressed the need to expand the overall candidate pool rather than compete for the same workers. Strategies discussed:

- Return recruiters to training programs: Companies should re-establish regular presence at CDL schools — speaking candidly about real-world expectations that instructors may not cover.
- Target younger demographics: The average driver is currently in their late 30s to 40s. Engaging younger people earlier will diversify and grow the talent pool.
- Paint the full career picture: Trucking and logistics should be presented as a career ecosystem — not just driving. Paths include dispatcher, driver trainer, fleet owner, and logistics manager, all attainable from a CDL start.
- Reframe industry messaging: Emphasize income potential (entry-level OTR roles starting at \$85,000–\$100,000+), long-term growth, and entrepreneurial opportunity alongside honest lifestyle trade-offs.

- Walmart's Associate-to-Driver (A2D) Program: Mitch Hall, Walmart Transportation, described a structured internal career pathway for hourly associates. Any hourly Walmart associate — in stores, clubs, or supply chain — can apply for a private fleet driving position through the A2D program, bypassing the standard 30-month external experience requirement. Selected associates complete 8–12 weeks of off-site CDL tractor-trailer training, followed by another 8–12 weeks with a local facilitator. Walmart placed approximately 500 A2D drivers in 2024; the 2025 goal is 1,000. This program is a significant internal pipeline-building strategy that reduces reliance on external hiring.

Training Quality, Standards & Concerns:

- Effective programs emphasize real-world hazards both behind the wheel and outside the vehicle, and treat training as an ongoing, career-long process — not a one-time certification.
- Armellini Trucking uses a team driving model for new OTR drivers: a second experienced driver accompanies them for extended periods, providing mentorship through real conditions that no classroom or daytime schedule can replicate.

Regulatory & Standards Concerns:

- CDL training standards were updated in January 2025, introducing modernized testing requirements alongside continued federal skill mandates.
- A concern was raised about over-reliance on vehicle automation reducing driver competency — e.g., drivers unable to locate basic controls like headlight switches due to automatic systems.
- A notable compliance failure was cited in Arizona (2024): 1,300 drivers were issued CDLs without completing their required tests, with only a re-test requirement as a penalty — raising questions about national oversight.
- Panelists called for greater accountability, with employers and training institutions both playing a role in verifying that CDL programs are delivering substantive training, not just processing paperwork.

Skills Gaps at the Entry Level:

- Technical & Automation Readiness
- Walmart noted that while current material handlers adapt to existing technology quickly, upcoming automation upgrades will require a more technically sophisticated workforce within the next 1–2 years.

- Automation technicians — skilled in electrical systems, mechanical systems, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), and fluid power — represent the most critical near-term hiring gap.
- Digital Literacy: Entry-level candidates are increasingly expected to use mobile apps, receive digital notifications, and troubleshoot tech issues independently while out on the road.
- Candidates who resist technology adoption or prefer paper-based workflows are difficult to support remotely.

Soft Skills & Professionalism:

- Across warehouse and CDL roles, panelists observed a trend of entitlement in interviews — candidates expecting offers rather than demonstrating interest and preparation.
- Basic professional readiness (appropriate dress, attentiveness, expressed enthusiasm) is becoming less common among entry-level applicants.

College–Industry Partnership: IRSC & Walmart:

- Natalia Chekhovskaya (IRSC) highlighted an existing — but underutilized — training partnership with Walmart's distribution center:
- IRSC already offers accelerated programs in electrical systems, mechanical systems, PLCs, and fluid power — aligned to Walmart's automation needs.
- Several Walmart associates have already completed IRSC upskilling programs and advanced from warehouse roles into maintenance technician positions.

Evolving Hiring Profiles:

- As automation and AI advance in logistics, hiring criteria are shifting
- Employers are increasingly screening for technology adaptability — candidates who can learn new software and operate digital tools independently.
- Driver retention is tied directly to follow-up: structured check-ins at 7 days, 30 days, and 3 months help identify and resolve issues around pay expectations, home time, and work-life balance before drivers disengage.
- No-call/no-show departures are common; companies that build feedback loops into onboarding recover faster and reduce turnover.