

Local Workforce Development Board 19 CAREERSOURCE HEARTLAND EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM] QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: April 2025- June 2025

Date of meeting: June 4, 2025

Report prepared by: D Doubleday, D. Davis

Local workforce development board contact: D Doubleday **Date:** June 4, 2025

B. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Industry or Education Organization	Contact Information
Chelsea Bilukha	Central Contractors	Industry	Chelsea@centralcontractors.com
Krystin Chapman	The Development Group	Industry	kchapman@thedevelopmentgroup.net
Zack Farr	Biotech Applied Research	Agriculture	z.farr@biotechappliedresearch.com
Tina Gottus	South Florida State College	Education	gottust@southflorida.edu
Maria Johnson	Indian River State College	Education	mgjohnso@irsc.edu
Paola Mogle	HCA Florida, Highlands Hospital	Industry	Paola.Mogle@hcahealthcare.com
Scott Morgan	School Board of Highlands County	Education	morgans@highlands.k12.fl.us

Daryl Roehm	Okeechobee County School District	Education	roehmd@okee.k12.fl.us
Dana Davis	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	ddavis@careersourceheartland.com
Donna Doubleday	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	ddoubleday@careersourceheartland.com
Ann Martin	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	amartin@careersourceheartland.com
Matthew Horkan	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	mhorkan@careersourceheartland.com

B. SUMMARY REPORT

The Consortium Chair, Scott Morgan, welcomed participants and reminded everyone of the three key components that are the focus of this Consortium, which will always be shown at the top of the agenda.

1. Summary Analysis of local labor market based on the industry representative needs and educational offerings.
2. Information on priority industry sectors and occupations for the local area; and
3. Information on the status of existing talent pipelines for in-demand occupations.

Mr. Morgan asked if there were any new members. Ms. Doubleday reported that Krystin Chapman with The Development Group in Wauchula, FL is a new member. Ms. Chapman introduced herself and shared the mission of The Development Group.

Meeting Location: The Board suggested rotating these meetings to allow businesses to showcase their business and better illustrate their workforce needs. Hosting a meeting would require a room and access to the internet. Krystin Chapman of The Development Group and Tina Gottus of South Florida State College indicated interest in hosting. Scott Morgan of Highlands County School District agreed it might be beneficial for school districts to host to showcase the available career and technical education programs. He will check on this possibility.

Discussion:

A. Labor Market Information

i. 2024-32 LWDB 19 Fastest Growing Industries

Members reviewed the 2024-2032 Top Industries by Projected Employment Growth Rate Region: CareerSource Heartland (19).

The following questions arose:

- Nurse Assistants have fallen off the list of In-Demand Jobs. This happens annually. What can be done to show the need and demand in this region to ensure it gets back on the list? Are there actions that can be taken to alleviate the need to continuously have to show that this area needs trained people in healthcare? In-demand entry level healthcare positions are key occupations for school district career and technical education programs.

Ms. Doubleday explained the process by which occupations are added or removed from the Demand Occupations List (DOL). Often, the numbers of new job openings and/or wage rates are the limiting factors for inclusion on the DOL. This four-county area is typically able to verify demand for Nurse Assistants. This occupation's wage rates tend to be below requirements for automatic inclusion on the DOL.

Also, when businesses are surveyed by bureaus of labor statistics, the wording of the questions can impact inclusion on the DOL. For example, asking, for a specific occupation, how many new positions the company will add in the next twelve months is different than asking how many people the company intends to hire in that occupation for the next twelve months.

Another concern is keeping nurse assistants on the State's Master Credentials List (MCL). One of the best ways to get and keep these occupations on the MCL is to show the sequencing to a higher wage occupation. One of the easiest ways to do that is to have articulation agreements in place to show that the training will articulate into a related, higher wage, higher skilled occupation. SFSC is currently working on articulation agreements for healthcare training programs.

- What falls under Information?
The Information sector comprises establishments engaged in the following processes: (a) producing and distributing information and cultural products, (b) providing the means to transmit or distribute these products as well as data or communications, and (c) processing data.

The main components of this sector are the publishing industries, including software publishing, and both traditional publishing and publishing exclusively on the Internet; the motion picture and sound recording industries; the

broadcasting industries, including traditional broadcasting and those broadcasting exclusively over the Internet; the telecommunications industries; Web search portals, data processing industries, and the information services industries.

The Information sector groups three types of establishments: (1) those engaged in producing and distributing information and cultural products; (2) those that provide the means to transmit or distribute these products as well as data or communications; and (3) those that process data.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag51.htm>

ii. 2024-32 LWDB 19 Fastest Growing Occupations

Members reviewed the 2024-2032 Fastest Growing Occupations for CareerSource Heartland (Desoto, Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee).

The following question arose.

- How is this information collected?
Industry growth rates are predicted by bureaus of labor statistics through analysis of historical trends, market research, economic conditions and concerns, and consumer behavior. Occupational growth rates are predicted by bureaus of labor statistics by combining economic forecasting with data on population, labor force participation, and industry growth.

B. Continued Discussion- Existing talent pipelines

i. Results of Soft/ Foundational Skills Survey

The results of the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Industry Competency Model Tier 1 Foundational Competencies of Personal Effective Checklist survey were presented. Survey respondents included several Consortium members and various local employers. It was agreed that whether “preferred” or “essential”, all competencies on the checklist are key foundational skills needed in the workforce.

The following questions arose.

- Are there activities occurring in local education entities to address the competencies on this checklist?

South Florida State College (SFSC) offers 5G Leadership Series that focuses on the competencies identified in the checklist’s Interpersonal Skills, Integrity, and Professionalism categories. Occupational skills instructors are embedding this training in their program curricula. Students receive badges

for completing 5G modules. The badges can be added to resumes, and clearly indicate the skills attained by the individual.

SFSC has partnered with the School District of Highlands County to offer this in the school system. SFSC can customize the 5G program to meet the needs of local employers.

➤ A follow-up question about 5G arose.

Is SFSC seeing practical application of the skills taught in 5G?

Yes, both in students and in employees who have completed the training.

Okeechobee County School District is addressing several of the competencies through their career and technical education programs. The fact that not all students participate in career and technical education programs, and therefore do not receive this skills training, was raised as a concern.

- Directed specifically to Mr. Roehm, related to the state education committee he serves on for curriculum development: From the last meeting, there seemed to be some disagreement about the development of a soft skills class. Would the Checklist survey be helpful for the development of soft skills curriculum?

Mr. Roehm reiterated that some members were okay with the development of a specific soft skills class, others did not want to add another graduation requirement or dictate what classes students would have to take. He added that employers keep saying that these skills are important, so action is being taken to include some of these skills by rewriting curriculum of some Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. Curricula rewrites continue and are not yet approved.

ii. Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

Chair Morgan explained the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) as the process the school districts use to inform curriculum development and resource allocation. Although it only needs to be updated every two years, locally, the schools have elected to review details annually to better address business needs. He proceeded to ask CLNA questions. Only the questions that received responses are included herein.

- Is your business expecting growth in the short, medium, or long term?

Mr. Farr responded that Biotech Applied Research anticipates growth and the need to add heavy equipment operator positions such as front-end loader operator, excavator operator and tree loggers. CDL drivers may also be needed, although they may temporarily contract out to fill that need.

Ms. Gottus explained SFSC's CDL program runs every 4 weeks at SFSC and invited Mr. Farr to come visit and talk to the students about the business' hiring needs.

- The 2024-2025 high skill wage, high skill occupations were described as having a mean wage of \$25.06 per hour with an entry level wage of \$16 per hour and will likely increase for 2025-26. Are there any positions in your business that meet those criteria?

Mr. Farr indicated Biotech Applied Research has entry level positions that start at \$16 and increase once employees earn certifications. The company also offers health insurance, vacation, and 401K.

Ms. Bilukha said Central Contractors' apprentices start at \$16 an hour and increase once they get their journeyman's licenses.

- Are there any areas you feel are missing in our school offerings?

The following question arose:

Is there anything on entrepreneurship?

In Highlands County, all 3 high schools offer ESV entrepreneurship, small business certification, Quick Books, and other related certifications. Some of these are also available in the business curriculum.

SFSC offers several online certifications such as Quick Books, how to start a business, how to write grants, project management, and more.

Highlands County School Board is looking at adding certifications in Project Management.

Okeechobee started entrepreneurship classes last school year. It is a successful program and a lot of students have signed up for the upcoming school year.

- Have you noticed any improvement in soft skills? Have you seen any improvement with hiring in the last year with regard to soft skills.

Ms. Bilukha reported she has not noticed any improvement. Offering examples, she added she had a couple of interviews this month where people couldn't look her in the eyes nor did they have a firm handshake.

- Are there any new programs you would suggest the school systems build into their Career Tech Ed offerings?

Mr. Farr indicated the need for stress relief in today's environment, and suggested doing something along the lines of mindfulness, meditation, yoga or mental health, or using a breathing coach. Ms. Gottus responded that SFSC is working on an annual mental health event to address those issues. This is still in the planning stages. She expressed the need for volunteers to serve on a committee to help steer this event's development.

- Other discussion:
Ms. Gottus reported that Leadership Highlands is accepting applications through July 14th.

Mr. Farr presented an update on Biotech Applied Research and the biochar project's progress. The machine is in place and running. He briefly explained how the biochar process works. He discussed the company's current and potential contract opportunities and current research activities. He also presented a sample of the final product and its potential uses.

Mr. Morgan shared that Highlands County School Board is working on expansion of their aerospace program and start-up of a diesel mechanic program.

- Mr. Morgan invited committee members to submit a success story that spotlights the connection between their business, the school district, and a student, focusing on the student's success.

Meeting adjourned at 11:02am.