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

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: April-June 2024

Date of meeting: May 30, 2024

Report prepared by: D Doubleday, M Snider

Local workforce development board contact: D Doubleday **Date:** June 4, 2024

B. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Industry or Education Organization	Contact Information
Meredith Durastanti	Hardee County School District	Education	mdurastanti@hardee.k12.fl.us
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
Kathy Severson	School District of DeSoto County	Education	kathy.severson@desotoschools.com
Kristie Mathey Demedicis	Larson Dairy, Inc.	Agriculture	ldicorp@embarqmail.com
Zack Farr	Biotech Applied Research	Scientific Research and Development	z.farr@biotechappliedresearch.com
Oliver Grandez	Westlake Royal Roofing Solutions	Manufacturing	ograndez@westlake.com

Rick Justice	First National Bank of Wauchula	Banking/Finance	rjustice@fnbwauchula.com
Alex Mencher	Westlake Royal Roofing Solutions	Manufacturing	amencher@westlake.com
Paola Mogle	HCA Florida-Highlands Hospital	Healthcare	Paola.Mogle@hcahealthcare.com
Brannon Sparks	Slash Pines Construction	Construction	brannonspc@gmail.com
Claire Thomas	Peace River Electric Co-operative	Electric Power Generation	claire.thomas@preco.coop
Donna Doubleday	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	ddoubleday@careersourceheartland.com
Ann Martin	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	amartin@careersourceheartland.com
Melody Snider	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	msnider@careersourceheartland.com
Matthew Horkan	CareerSource Heartland	Workforce	mhorkan@careersourceheartland.com

B. SUMMARY REPORT

The Consortium Chair, Scott Morgan, reviewed the challenges identified during the previous meeting.

- Since Agriculture jobs are typically not advertised, how do we collect the data needed to verify job openings and the need for training in this industry?
- Businesses need people with computer skills and human interaction skills.
- Training in personal hygiene is needed, especially in healthcare and construction.
- There is a huge need across health-related occupations; also for teachers; industrial mechanics, repairers, welders; construction workers, and skilled trades people.

- Many businesses are providing their own training for new employees, but this is costly and time consuming.
- How do the training providers keep text materials and facilities updated with change happening so quickly in almost all occupations?

The Chair also reviewed solutions discussed at the previous meeting.

- Programs available or planned at all four school districts and both colleges include carpentry and construction; healthcare; welding; and advanced manufacturing.
- DeSoto and Hardee High Schools offer a small business/entrepreneurship training course that includes accounting; word press; Quickbooks; human interaction; and computer skills. Highlands and Okeechobee Schools are looking into offering this also.
- SFSC offers 5G Power Skills workshops that focus on basic foundational skills such as interpersonal communication, professionalism, adaptive thinking, and leadership.
- CareerSource Heartland has an internet-based online learning portal with a variety of training options available to businesses, including soft and hard skills.
- Xello is an online career platform used in school systems to help students with career decision-making.
- Local school districts are using a system to help them build and implement talent development pathways to prepare, advance, and promote educators.

Chair Morgan reminded members that this Consortium agreed to continue to visit soft skills, human interaction skills, and customer service in more depth to discern what this means in each business. He also reported that the Consortium's last discussion was shared with CareerSource Heartland's Board of Directors who indicated they were impressed by the discussion and are using this information to consider actions and solutions moving forward. Their message to this Consortium was "GREAT JOB!" and "THANK YOU!"

Discussion:

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

   Members reviewed the current Florida Online Job Demand Tool indicating the top 15 advertised positions for the month of April (4/24). When asked if the information presented appeared accurate, industries represented offered a thumbs up and indicated no concerns or questions.

2. Information on priority industry sectors and occupations for the local area.

   Members reviewed the Percentage of Vacancies with Soft Skills Gaps by Occupation Report (FloridaCommerce-Florida Insights). While not comfortable commenting on the number of skills gaps per vacancy, members indicated the soft skills identified (Reliability and time management; Communication; Leadership; and Problem-Solving) represented skill gaps universally across all industries and occupations. The very high percentage of the soft skill gaps reported for Roofers raised particular concerns and reinforced the need for soft skills expectations to be included in job training programs.

3. Information on the status of existing talent pipelines for in-demand occupations.

   Chair Morgan provided a brief overview of the Master Credential's List (MCL) and its impact on what courses and credentials the school districts can offer as well as the training programs that can be funded by workforce dollars. This will greatly impact talent pipelines for local in-demand occupations. The Consortium reviewed and discussed the occupations/credentials that are slated for removal.

   - Agriculture (Farm, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations):
     - Members suggested that while the credentials identified might be beneficial, they are not required for the majority of their positions. These credentials might be helpful to managers within the industry, although managers generally possess related college degrees.
     - One member indicated that the business employs approximately 90 full-time individuals, and averages about 40 openings for milkers annually. The majority of their milkers are Hispanic with limited English skills.
     - The MCL provisional list indicates that the linked occupations for agricultural positions reflected under SOC code 45-2093 do not meet wage criteria, indicating mean wages of $35,960. Members indicated that figure more closely reflects entry level wages for milkers and laborers. One member indicated entry level milkers begin at $37,000. Managers entry level wage starts around $60,000.
     - Members were quick to state that the credentials in question would likely be valuable to vendors that are used by local agriculture businesses. These vendors handle farm operating permits, water use permits, soil testing, lab testing, manure digesting machines, house water wells for employee housing,

and related refrigeration installation and repairs. They also reported that the credentials may be helpful for individuals interested in a career pathway to management. However, there is little management turnover in this business.
    - Education representatives reported that the students earning many of these agricultural credentials learn their skills through participation in Future Farmers of America (FFA) and added that FFA addresses many of the leadership and soft skills this Consortium has identified as lacking in the local workforce.
    - Education also indicated that these agriculture certifications articulate to college credit.
    - Re: SOC code 31-9096, Education representatives indicated students earning the Certified Veterinary Assistant credential are landing employment in local veterinary practices.
    - One member indicated horticulture, soil science, soil analytics, regenerative agriculture, waste removal (manure into power), and sustainability are all significant and are becoming more important in today's culture and society.

- Healthcare Support Occupations:
    - Certified Nurse Assistant and Patient Care Technician are shown as not meeting wage criteria. Nurse Assistant indicates the need to show sequencing into higher wage occupations.
    - A comment was made that Certified Nurse Assistant has traditionally been identified as a steppingstone into Practical Nursing and beyond.
    - One Consortium member indicated her business does not require these credentials as her company provides training internally. She clarified that if someone came to them with these credentials it would be beneficial, yet not a requirement for hire.
    - Considering the local population, and with these occupations in demand in this area, follow-up is recommended with nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and home-health care entities.

- Manufacturing
    - Consortium members indicated the various coding certifications listed were not directly needed for positions at the local manufacturing plants. They might be beneficial for engineering departments (which are not local). For the production plants, the skills needed include operating computerized equipment, understanding the logic of running the equipment, some mechanical knowledge, a basic understanding of pneumatics, hydraulics, and sensors in plan with logic software.

- Education members indicated courses addressing robotics, assembly, logic coding, and pneumatics are currently available. Hydraulics is not yet available at the k-12 level.
- Manufacturer stated pneumatics and hydraulics are similar in principle.
- Educators reported that for production, Autodesk 3D design and Fusion 360 are available, allowing students to create products using 3D printers before actual production.

- Construction and Extraction Operations
  - The list indicates Home Builders Institute's building certifications for carpenter helpers, construction laborers, and electrician helpers are slated for removal due to low wage rates and lack of local demand.
  - One Consortium member reported that the mean wage shown on the list is low, and more closely reflects the local starting pay for these positions. He also reported that there is a local demand for these workers in these jobs. He commented that he and many of his colleagues tend to look closer for soft skills than certifications in the hiring process. If the person appears willing to learn, is capable of showing up on time, and will report to work consistently every day, his company will teach the hard skills needed.
  - Educators reiterated that many of the certification courses incorporate leadership and reliability skills.

- Food Preparation and Serving-Related Occupations
  - Educators reported surprise and concern that the ServSafe certification for Food Protection Manager was slated for removal. Almost all restaurants in the area require this certification, and individuals presenting this certification during the interview are being hired on the spot.

- Computer and Mathematical Occupations
  - WordPress and various Coding Specialist certifications are slated for removal.
  - No marketers or marketing businesses were present. A few questions arose:
    - Are businesses outsourcing web design and social media marketing?
    - How many companies in the local area do web design and marketing?

- Is there local demand for these positions and what is the entry level wage rate?
- Are these skills a component of a job, with related tasks assigned to employees with other occupational titles?

4. Additional discussion:

- The younger generations seem to enjoy working outside an office environment and want to contribute to society, to do something meaningful and impactful.
- To the question "Is anything being taught regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI), educators responded that AI is part of robotics, Python, Fusion 360 and other coding courses. There is also some AI in WordPress.
- AI coding is desired by teachers although local school districts are not yet prepared to add this.
- Coding certifications are slated to come off the Master Credentials List, yet many related jobs can be done remotely.
- Is anything being done with AI in agriculture? Fertilizer is AI calculated.
- Building and programming drones is available in high school courses.
- One school district visited a local manufacturing plant and found AI logic in operation throughout the business. The district is collaborating with that company. Students will get hands-on experience in a multitude of manufacturing tasks. A suggestion was made to document and video those experiences for career awareness for others.
- The local Demand Occupations List was explained, including the documentation needed to have an occupation added. Also mentioned was the need for letters of endorsement to keep needed certifications on the Master Credentials List. Educators reminded all that these courses include leadership and many of the soft skills employers need from their employees.
- Educators reminded business partners they are always open to meet to discuss processes, courses, and skills needed. Their focus is to prepare individuals with the skills local businesses need.
- Educators reported the Comprehensive Learning Needs Assessments for this year have been completed.