

LWDB 21 Palm Beach County EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM of the Palm Beaches QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: Q 3

Date of meeting: 09/16/2025

Report prepared by: Julia Dattolo, President & CEO

Local Workforce Development Board contact: Julia Dattolo, President & CEO

B. ATTENDANCE

See attached attendance of Consortium members and industry specific guests below.

C. SUMMARY REPORT

Summary:

The session focused on the collaboration between education and industry to address workforce needs in Palm Beach County, particularly in the agriculture sector. Participants included representatives from various educational institutions and organizations involved in workforce development and the agriculture industry. The discussion was opened by Julia Dattolo who emphasized the importance of aligning educational programs with the labor market demands, particularly in agriculture, and presented labor market statistics to illustrate current job trends.

The conversation shifted to the CareerSource learner pathways initiative, which aims to connect students with educational opportunities in key industries such as agriculture. The need for partnerships between educational institutions and employers to tailor training programs, such as operator training for specialized equipment, was highlighted by a conference room participant. The West Technical Education Center's offerings, including dual enrollment with Palm Beach State College and its adult education, were discussed as vital resources for developing a skilled workforce.

Eva Webb pointed out the necessity for certifications in agricultural and trades, including diesel mechanics and electrical training, and noted that several schools in the area are utilizing these certifications for funding. Krista Springer Basore raised concerns about the shortage of certified drivers for trucks and heavy equipment, which poses safety risks. Dr Ford from West Tech mentioned the establishment of a local testing site for diesel mechanics and CDL training to alleviate travel burdens for students.

The meeting also addressed the need for community engagement in agriculture, with Krista Springer Basore proposing outreach initiatives to educate students about agricultural careers. Eva Webb discussed the benefits of farm tours organized by the Florida Sugarcane League, while Heather Manrow mentioned funding for developing an Ag business and finance curriculum to enhance financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills among students entering the agricultural sector. The discussion underscored the importance of fostering connections between education and industry to build a robust talent pool in Palm Beach County.

Welcome and Introductions:

Julia Dattolo initiated the meeting by welcoming attendees and informing them about the recording. Participants introduced themselves, highlighting their roles and affiliations. The introductions included a diverse group from various educational and workforce development organizations as well as farmers and the farm workers league.

Labor Market Overview and Industry Needs in Agriculture:

A conversation was initiated about the collaboration between education and industry to address workforce needs in agriculture. Key labor market statistics were shared, noting that Palm Beach County outpaces national job numbers but faces challenges such as an aging workforce. The need for younger individuals to enter the industry was emphasized, and apprenticeship programs were suggested as a potential solution.

Educational and Learner Pathways in Palm Beach County:

The CareerSource learner pathways were presented, emphasizing the importance of showcasing educational options in Palm Beach County to retain educated youth. The pathways cover various industries, including healthcare and agriculture, and aim to identify gaps in educational offerings.

Industry Needs and Educational Partnerships:

The need for collaboration between schools and industries to provide tailored training programs was emphasized, with a mention of the successful Career Dual Enrollment Program at West Tech. The discussion included various vocational training offerings, such as welding, CDL, and low voltage programs, aimed at meeting industry demands. Additionally, the importance of apprenticeship programs and the support provided by CareerSource for employers hiring apprentices was noted by Charles Duval AVP CareerSource.

Discussion on Agricultural Certifications and Workforce Needs:

Eva Webb discussed the demand for skilled trades in agriculture, mentioning the AEST program and its various certifications. Heather Manrow confirmed that their certifications are CAPE-listed, which allows for funding, and reported that approximately 764 certifications were issued last year. She also noted that the ag tech and ag biotech certifications are the most utilized in Palm Beach County.

Discussion on Community Needs and Educational Opportunities:

Krista Springer Basore discussed the need to gather insights from Wedgeworth graduates regarding community needs. She pointed out the significant demand for certified drivers in the trucking and heavy equipment sectors, which has been a concern for local employers. Additionally, she mentioned the potential for collaboration with a new high school in Westlake to address these educational needs.

Discussion on Workforce Training Needs and Job Fair Opportunities:

The importance of recruiting strategies and in-house training for potential employees was emphasized, particularly in the context of CDL testing. It was announced that the "Paychecks for Patriots" job fair is scheduled for November 5, which will involve Palm Beach State College and the school district, providing a platform for students to secure employment before graduation.

Language Support in Technical Training Programs:

An inquiry was made about the availability of courses in Spanish and Creole, particularly regarding testing requirements. It was clarified that testing must be conducted in English, although some medical programs can be taught in other languages. The IET model was discussed, which integrates English language support with technical training, enabling students to enhance their English skills while pursuing their career education.

Career Pathways and Industry Collaboration:

Krista Springer Basore raised a question regarding the flexibility of career tracks for students, particularly when job opportunities arise in different industries. It was explained that employers are encouraged to engage with students to discuss various career pathways, noting that students often change their interests as they gain experience in different fields. The importance of completing educational programs before transitioning to employment was also emphasized.

Engaging the Community in Agriculture Education:

Krista Springer Basore discussed the importance of connecting the agricultural community with the public, noting that many people lack familiarity with farmers. She suggested outreach efforts, including events at the South Florida Fair, to inform students about agricultural careers and the community they represent. Kim Lea Dean, Palm Beach State College, supported this idea, proposing to integrate farm-to-table concepts into the curriculum and encourage entrepreneurial thinking among students.

Discussion on Agricultural Education and Opportunities:

Eva Webb mentioned the Florida Sugarcane League's farm tours as a valuable opportunity for individuals to learn about agricultural job prospects. Krista Springer Basore emphasized the necessity of financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills for success in agriculture, particularly for those in leadership roles. Heather Manrow noted that AEST has secured funding to create an ag business and finance curriculum to meet the growing demand for such education in Florida.

Other Key Takeaways:

- * Farm tours and their importance for understanding agriculture.
- * The significance of the nursery industry in Florida's economy.
- * The need for financial literacy in agricultural education.
- * Updates to the learner pathway for Palm Beach County students.

Action Items:

- * Julia Dattolo will explore the possibility of finding information on job seekers' ages in the region.
- * Julia Dattolo will send a copy of the data and presentation slides to all participants after the meeting.
- * PBSC and Adult Ed will work on strategies to expand trade offerings in the Glades area.
- * Julia Dattolo will invite industry partners to participate in the upcoming job fair called Paychecks for Patriots.
- * Eva Webb will contact the Florida Sugarcane League to find out about setting up a farm tour for interested participants.

* Heather Manrow will develop an ag business and ag finance curriculum and certification due to the identified need in Florida.

* Julia Dattolo will compile all the information shared during the meeting into a report and update the learner pathway for Palm Beach County.

Key Questions:

- * What specific certifications are available for electrical training in agriculture?
- * What are the challenges in recruiting qualified instructors for technical training programs?
- * How can the agricultural community engage more effectively with local educational institutions?
- * How will the ag business and finance curriculum be integrated into high school education?

EDUCATION & INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM OF THE PALM BEACHES
(FOCUS) AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY MEETING

09/16/25

ATTENDEES CONTACT INFORMATION

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