

# Workforce Now A Regional Research Initiative

## Study Three Key Stakeholders Interviews: Educational Institutions



**PREPARED BY:**  
**WORKFORCE NOW STUDY TEAM**



*School of Business &  
Technology*



*Regional Economic  
Research Institute  
Lutgert College of Business*



**HODGES**  
UNIVERSITY

*Johnson School of  
Business*

## WORKFORCE NOW INITIATIVE

### *Key Stakeholders Interviews with Educational Institutions*

#### PREFACE

*Workforce Now* is a regional research initiative to identify current and future talent requirements for the five counties of Southwest Florida. The initiative was created in October 2012 as an outcome of the Education Summits produced by The News-Press Media Group. It is envisioned as a systematic, strategic, multi-year focus on understanding and meeting critical workforce needs. The initiative is designed to provide better information on workforce gaps including skills and characteristics desired by regional employers. The plan is to study up to six industries or sectors per year to provide a continuous stream of information from employers to educational institutions and to look for ways to create dialogue and new partnerships between businesses and educational institutions. The quality of the regional workforce is a primary competitive factor in the region's ability to grow and prosper in a competitive global marketplace. Thus far, two pilot reports have been developed based on interviews with three major employers, Arthrex, Chicos FAS, and Lee Memorial Health System; and three business sectors, Finance, Construction/Manufacturing, and Tourism/Hospitality. This report is the third study in this regional initiative.

This study, "Key Stakeholders Interviews with Educational Institutions" represents a summary of interviews with key stakeholders from both public and private educational institutions in the region. Interviewees who participated in the study spanned K-12 school systems, technical schools, colleges, and universities. It is our hope that this report, combined with the two previous studies, will help build a stronger bridge of communication between businesses and educators allowing them to work closer together to better align business and educational programs for Southwest Florida.

This project and report would not be possible without the generous support of the founding Workforce Now investors:

The News-Press Media Group  
Partnership for Collier's Future Economy  
The Lee County Industrial Development Authority  
The Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board  
Florida Gulf Coast University  
Hodges University

Arthrex, Inc.  
Busey Bank  
Chico's FAS, Inc.  
Manhattan Construction  
Edison State College

A special thanks to Mei-Mei Chan, President and Publisher of the News-Press Media Group, for leading the effort and the numerous sponsors - and to Florida Gulf Coast University, Edison State College, and Hodges University for providing the research leadership and staff to complete this third Workforce Now report.

*Gary Jackson*

Dr. Gary Jackson  
Director  
Regional Economic Research  
Institute  
Lutgert College of Business  
Florida Gulf Coast University

*John Meyer*

Dr. John Meyer  
Dean  
School of Business &  
Technology  
Edison State College

*Aysegul Timur*

Dr. Aysegul Timur  
Program Chair  
Business Administration and  
Public Administration  
Johnson School of Business  
Hodges University

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks and appreciation to the following individuals for their participation and insight to complete this report:

#### Educational Institutions

Charlotte County Public Schools  
Charlotte County Technical School  
Collier County Public Schools  
Edison State College  
Florida Gulf Coast University  
Fort Myers Institute of Technology  
Glades County Public Schools  
Hendry County Public Schools  
Hodges University  
Immokalee Technical Center  
Keiser University  
Lee County Public Schools  
Lorenzo Walker Technical School  
Nova Southeastern University  
Rasmussen College  
Southwest Florida College

#### Interviewed

Dr. Doug Whittaker  
Mr. Barney Duffy  
Dr. Kamela Patton  
Dr. Jeffery Allbritten  
Dr. Wilson Bradshaw, Dr. Ron Toll  
Mr. William McCormick  
Mr. Scott Bass  
Dr. Paul Puletti  
Dr. Jeanette Brock, Dr. Kim Spiezio, Dr. Joseph Pepe  
Mr. Dorin Oxender  
Dr. Pamela Johnson, Ms. Julia De Llanos  
Dr. Nancy Graham, Ms. Sue Roshon, Dr. Joseph Burke  
Ms. Yolanda Flores  
Mr. Kevin Hunter  
Mr. Tom Tonner  
Mr. Jim Mathis, Mr. Doug Min

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	i
RESEARCH TEAM/SUPPORT .....	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	v
1.0 INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY .....	1
2.0 STUDY FINDINGS .....	5
APPENDICE A: Interview Guide.....	14

## RESEARCH TEAM

### Florida Gulf Coast University

- **Dr. Gary Jackson** is the Director of the Regional Economic Research Institute at Florida Gulf Coast University and an Assistant Professor of Economics.
- **Dr. Arthur Rubens** is a Professor of Management and the Associate Director of the Regional Economic Research Institute.

### Edison State College

- **Dr. John Meyer** is the Dean of the School of Business and Technology at Edison State College.

### Hodges University

- **Dr. Aysegul Timur** is the Program Chair for Business Administration and Public Administration in the Johnson School of Business and a Professor of Economics.
- **Anke Stugk** is an Assistant Professor in the Johnson School of Business.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Workforce Now* is a regional research initiative to identify current and future talent requirements for the five counties of Southwest Florida. The initiative was created in October 2012 as an outcome of the Education Summits produced by The News-Press Media Group. The initiative is designed as a systematic, multi-year program designed to provide better information on workforce gaps including skills and characteristics desired by regional employers, and to understand and meet the critical workforce needs in the Southwest Florida region.

As part of this initiative, three studies have been conducted to date. The first study assessed the Workforce Methodology and the needs of three major employers, Arthrex, Chicos FAS, and Lee Memorial Health System; the second assessed the needs of three business sectors, Finance, Construction/ Manufacturing, and Tourism/Hospitality. In this third study of the Workforce Now initiatives, the study team conducted interviews with key stakeholders from public and private educational institutions representing universities, colleges, technical schools, and K-12 school systems in the region. The study was started in the middle of April and was completed in September 2013.

The study consisted of 16 interviews with Key Respondents from K-12 school systems, technical centers/schools, colleges, and universities in the Southwest Florida region.

	<b>Educational Institutions</b>	<b>Plan for Interviews</b>
	<b>Public Education: K-12</b>	
1	Collier County Public Schools	Teams of two or three
2	*Lee County Public Schools	Teams of two or three
3	Charlotte County Public Schools	Teams of two or three
4	Hendry County Public Schools	Teams of one or two
5	Glades County Public Schools	Single interviewer
	<b>Tech Centers</b>	
6	Fort Myers Institute of Technology	Single interviewer
7	Lorenzo Walker Technical School	Single interviewer
8	Charlotte County Technical School	Single interviewer
9	Immokalee Technical Center	Single interviewer
	<b>Colleges and Universities</b>	
10	Florida Gulf Coast University	Teams of two or three
11	Edison State College	Teams of two or three
12	Hodges University	Teams of two or three
13	Nova Southeastern University	Single interviewer
14	Southwest Florida College	Single interviewer
15	Keiser University	Single interviewer
16	Rasmussen College	Single interviewer

\*Two interviews were conducted ; one with former superintendent and one with current superintendent.

As part of the interviews, a 20-question survey instrument was developed. The instrument addressed three primary themes:

- Sources of Workforce Information
- Value of Workforce Initiative including forums and reports
- Limitations/Impediments to Changing Educational Programs.

The Key Respondents were contacted by phone and email regarding their interviews. Following initial contact, scheduled meetings were set up to interview the Key Respondents. Almost all of the Key Respondents' interviews were conducted in person, with a few having to be interviewed by phone due to scheduling conflicts. Below is summary of the key findings of the study:

## **Key Findings**

### **Workforce Information**

- The Key Respondents cited multiple ways that they receive information about the region's workforce. The most frequent sources for this information were Workforce Development Boards (Southwest Florida and Cape Coral); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); Employer and Business Advisory Groups, Local Chambers of Commerce, and Economic Development Offices (EDOs). Universities, colleges, and, in particular, privately-owned schools and technical schools stated that this information is considered and used in planning and development of programs. Beyond the advisory groups and aforementioned sources and organizations, a number of other sources were used to obtain workforce information; e.g., Alliance of Educational Leaders, Bio Florida; Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida; state databases, etc.
- The Key Respondents stated that the most common type of information that they receive is employment vacancies, with some position and skills openings coming from the organization's advisory groups. Although the Key Respondents stated that vacancies can be viewed on a more regular basis, most workforce information is generally received on an annual or semi-annual basis.
- A majority of the universities, colleges, and technical schools reported that they do not conduct their own primary labor force research studies and rely on secondary data sources. Most use existing data from groups in the region; e.g., Workforce Board, Horizon Council, key employers, etc. or have an advisory group that provides feedback on existing and planned programs. A small number of higher educational institutions conduct labor studies, primarily through focus groups with employers and Alumni and Employer surveys.
- On the whole, most of the universities, colleges, and technical centers stated that they have advisory groups aligned with many of their programs and/or areas of discipline (K-12 School Systems have them primarily in their Technical Centers), and that these advisory groups provide them with workforce information and advice about positions and skills specific to the programs or disciplines.
- The Key Respondents indicated a number of areas about which they would like to receive additional workforce information. These include industry and occupational growth trends and projections; new ventures and existing companies' expansions; specific indicators of job skills; and needs of different sizes of business; e.g., small businesses. They further stated that ideally they would like to receive this workforce information at least quarterly. Receiving labor market information more regularly was especially important to private entities that can more readily create or modify programs to market demands.

### **Value of Workforce Now Initiative**



- Most of the Key Respondents reported that they are familiar with the Workforce Now initiative and they have seen or read the reports from the previous two studies. For those who said they did not personally read the reports, they stated that they had given the reports to one of their key personnel to read and report to them on.
- From the earlier Workforce Now studies, a number of positions were identified that key employers said they would need in the future. Varied Key Respondents communicated that they have existing programs to develop training in several of the needed position groups; e.g., universities and colleges have programs in hospitality; technical schools have programs in construction management, etc. In addition, two of the educational institutions (private universities) said that the information contained in the previous Workforce Now studies led them to modify and create programs in IT to meet the needs for IT Analysts and IT Technicians. Although identified position types such as robotics and compliance officers were not generally part of current programs, one of the technical centers, with the help of corporate sponsorship, is creating a program in CNC/Robotics.
- The Key Respondents further stated that the “fundamental workforce skills,” as reported in the two earlier Workforce Now Reports, were of critical importance. The most often-cited skills that were of highest importance are critical thinking and active listening.
- Most of the Key Respondents stated that they intend to incorporate the Workforce Now report into their programs and curriculum strategic planning and development, with several private institutions stating that they had already made changes to their curriculum based on the Workforce Now Report.
- The Key Respondents had a number of suggestions and comments on ways to enhance the Workforce initiative. Some of the suggestions that they made were as follows:
  - More timely overviews of regional labor market trends
  - Provide a better understanding of skills, knowledge, and tasks of occupations
  - Add online forums for discussion of Workforce Now Findings
  - Emphasize current needs including the “needs of smaller employers”
  - Create links between hiring agents (employer HR) and Career Development Centers at schools
  - Provide contrast between online and classroom students (differences in the skills and learning ability)
  - Provide details on training program availability
  - Share Best Practices on using workforce information for program planning
  - Focus on specific needs of technical centers
  - Include parents and others to help guide students in their occupation choice.

*Changing Educational Programs*

---

- Key Respondents were very positive about the Workforce Now initiative and the information that it provided. Almost universally, they stated that they could see this information being used to plan and develop new programming. Most Key Respondents from public institutions said it takes a significant amount of time to modify or implement a new program (2-3 years), while private entities related a much shorter turnaround time to modify and start a program ( 1 year or less). However, in order to modify or add programs, Key Respondents across public and private institutions stated that funding would be needed. In order to get additional funding, Key Respondents generally felt that legislative action may be required, especially in the area of student aid, and necessary resources to hire faculty and support the operation of new programs. In addition, most of the institutions have accreditation requirements that must be met when adding or modifying programs.
- The Key Respondents were asked what changes would allow them to be more responsive to workforce needs. To this final question the Key Respondents gave a variety of responses :
  - Knowledge of marketability of new program areas
  - Sustainability of the program (long-term demand for a program)
  - Development and turn-around rate to develop program (get a program started and to market)
  - Current placement needs
  - Trends (now and in the future)
  - Better communication across schools and businesses
  - Autonomy (able to do things to meet current and future needs)
  - Concise, easy to read, regular updates on the labor market and employment gaps
  - Data and documentation
  - More strategic approach to regional educational development
  - Ratio of industry certifications and placement rates
  - Best practices (shared across entities)
  - Flexibility and reduced paperwork and reporting
  - Increased funding (build new buildings for new programs and hire new faculty)

## **Summary & Recommendations**

Study Three shows that the Key Respondents with the educational institutions in the region are not only very familiar with the Workforce Now Initiative, but are very

supportive of it. Although there are training needs differences among the educational institutions based on mission and specific characteristics of the area served, overwhelmingly all the key respondents appear to embrace the effort and see it as a tool that could be used to aid future programming. This perspective is strongest among the technical centers and independent privately-funded entities. Although, private universities and colleges that were part of larger corporate entities expressed great support for use of this data for program development, the Key Respondents stated that they frequently required final approval for new programs from their corporate headquarters.

Most of the educational institutions admit that there are barriers to implementing new programs. For many, especially the public institutions, the implementation of new programs take a long time (2-3 years) and there are funding issues and accreditation requirements. Although the duration of time to modify and bring a program to market in private entities was much shorter, funding and the long term viability of programs were of great concern. This notion that programs should meet long-term needs and not fulfill short-term needs only was also shared by the technical schools.

Key Respondents to the study expressed the need for more information. Ideally, this information would not only include large employers and new business ventures, but also smaller employers and expansion and growth plans of existing businesses and organizations in the region. In addition, they would like to see more data on specific skills needed by region's businesses and specific job positions for the future.

In closing, although there were some differences noted between public and private universities and colleges, primarily in their ability to respond to new program

development, there was a desire by both to create stronger links between their universities, colleges, and centers with businesses and organizations in the region. Specifically, Key Respondents want to see closer relationship with business leaders and bringing together the hiring agents from companies with career development officers at the schools and universities.

Below are recommendations that address some of these requests as well as general recommendations put forward by the study team.

*Recommendations*

1. Future studies should include specific information about occupational knowledge, skills, and talents. Thus far, much of the information presented concerned large organizations and position information was very broad in regard to workforce needs; e.g, position group or area. It is recommended that more specific information is provided (in essence, drill down to the skill and knowledge areas that are needed for the position).
2. Workforce information should include the needs of both large and small businesses and organizations. Southwest Florida is home to many small businesses and many of the graduates of our educational institutions will be employed in these businesses. Therefore, workforce information needs to be more representative of the area and should include not only the key companies, but the workforce needs of many of the small businesses and organizations in the area.
3. In order to develop trends and forecasts for the workforce, the educational institutions need information about new companies and their needs, as well as expansions, additions, and mergers of existing companies.

4. The educational institutions would like to see the region’s workforce information published or made available more frequently (perhaps on a quarterly basis). Having more frequent access to this information could help the institutions design programs and create educational strategies to ultimately place more of their students, interns, and graduates in jobs and professions in the region.
5. The respondents stated that it was “critical” that the workforce know the “Fundamental Workforce Skills” identified in Workforce Now previous reports. It is recommended future meetings should address this topic and that a “plan of action” should be established to accomplish this goal (this process could support and/or accompany current efforts by a sub-committee of the Horizon Council that is undertaking this effort).
6. Educational institutions said that they wish to continue their participation in future meetings and summits for this initiative, but there was a consensus that the dialogue needs to be ongoing throughout the year and not be limited to an individual event or handful of events. A few of the respondents recommended that some type of online blog or forum be developed among the educational institutions where they can continue the conversations, collaborations, and synergy that comes from the Educational/Workforce Summit. Therefore, a recommendation would be to explore interest of educational leaders in participating in an online forum.
7. The responses provided by the regional educational organizations varied to their link with businesses and their use and application of workforce data. It is recommended that forums be developed to share this information across institutions and that a process be developed to share best “Best Practices” among the institutions.

8. Key to the success of this initiative is bringing regional business and industry and educational institutions closer together. Perhaps one initial step would be for hiring agents or HR Directors from companies to have direct links with Career Planning officers in the educational institutions.
9. Consider changing the designation of postsecondary technical centers and vocational schools to technical or vocational college.

# **Workforce Now**

## **Study Three:**

### **Key Stakeholders Interviews with Educational Institutions**

#### **1.0 Introduction & Methodology**

*Workforce Now* is a new regional initiative to better understand Southwest Florida's labor market and what employers cite as their needs, critical gaps, and specific skills desired. Thus far, two pilot reports have been developed based on interviews with three major employers, Arthrex, Chicos FAS, and Lee Memorial Health System; and three business sectors, Finance, Construction/Manufacturing, and Tourism/Hospitality. This report "Key Stakeholders Interviews with Educational Institutions" is the third study in this regional initiative.

The purpose of the study is to interview key stakeholders from educational institutions in the Southwest Florida Region in order to begin to identify what education processes and mechanisms are with regard to providing workforce education that meets local needs, and what specific obstacles educational institutions face in funding, creating, supporting, and providing programs. The institutions represented both public and private entities from three distinct levels or groupings of education providers in Southwest Florida: K-12, technical schools, and colleges and universities.

The key respondents study was conducted from the middle of April to the last week in September 2013. In early June, as part of the initial phase of the study, the study team members identified the institutions and key stakeholders that would be targeted for interviews. In addition, the study team determined the number of interviewers that should be present. Below is list of key stakeholders and the plan for interviews (number of interviewers):

	<b>Educational Institutions</b>	<b>Plan for Interviews</b>
<b>Public Education: K-12</b>		
1	Collier County Public Schools	Teams of two or three
2	*Lee County Public Schools	Teams of two or three
3	Charlotte County Public Schools	Teams of two or three
4	Hendry County Public Schools	Teams of one or two
5	Glades County Public Schools	Single interviewer
<b>Tech Centers</b>		
6	Fort Myers Institute of Technology	Single interviewer
7	Lorenzo Walker Technical School	Single interviewer
8	Charlotte County Technical School	Single interviewer
9	Immokalee Technical Center	Single interviewer
<b>Colleges and Universities</b>		
10	Florida Gulf Coast University	Teams of two or three
11	Edison State College	Teams of two or three
12	Hodges University	Teams of two or three
13	Nova Southeastern University	Single interviewer
14	Southwest Florida College	Single interviewer
15	Keiser University	Single interviewer
16	Rasmussen College	Single interviewer

*\*Two interviews were conducted (former superintendent and new superintendent)*

Following the identification of institutions and key stakeholders, the study team divided the interviews and each interviewee was contacted by phone or email informing him or her about the study and asking him or her to participate in the interview. Follow-up phone and email contacts were made after one and two weeks respectively for



difficult to reach or non-responders. Following this initial contact and follow-up, a prearranged time and location was established to conduct the interview.

Most of the interviews of key stakeholders were conducted during the month of June; however, some interviews were not able to be conducted until mid-September. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. In order to ensure continuity among the interviews and consistency of responses, researchers used a standardized questionnaire which consisted of 20 questions distributed over three broad categories or themes:

- Sources of Workforce Information
- Value of Workforce Now Initiative including forums and reports
- Limitations/Impediments to Changing Educational Programs

Specifically, the broad topics asked in the interviews included:

➤ Sources of Workforce Information:

- ✓ Do you receive or gather regional and local workforce information and how often does your organization receive regional and local workforce information that is used for program planning?
- ✓ What organizations provide labor force information or studies for your planning and program development?
- ✓ Does your organization conduct any regional research studies or labor force analyses?
- ✓ Can you explain your regional labor force research study process and scope and what additional regional and local labor force information would you like to obtain?

- Value of Workforce Now Initiative
  - ✓ Familiarity with Workforce Now Initiative and select areas of training conducted?
  - ✓ Importance and an annual regional assessment of fundamental workforce skills?
  - ✓ Have you reviewed the first two Workforce Now reports (key companies and industries ) and how useful were they for your program planning?
  - ✓ Would you or a designee attend an annual forum such as the *MarketWatch/Educational Summit*?
  
- Limitations/Impediments to Changing Educational Programs
  - ✓ How long does it take to modify or enhance an existing educational program and how long does it take to develop a new educational program?
  - ✓ What would allow your organization to be responsive to the region's changing workforce needs and provide the "top five changes" that would help facilitate these changes?

It is important to note that although 20 questions were asked, some of the questions required a short response; however, many of the questions were more open-ended in nature, thus allowing for considerable discretion in the interviewee response. The primary objective of the interviews was to capture and document consistent themes and commentary expressed by the interviewees. For the purpose of this study, consistency is defined as practices, attitudes, beliefs, and/or feelings that were expressed by two or more respondents, or that which can be construed from the manner in which questions were answered.

## **2.0 Key Informant Analysis**

The primary focus of this study included 16 in-depth interviews with a select group of key stakeholders or Key Respondents from public and private educational institutions in Southwest Florida. These individuals consisted of superintendents from the five local school districts, university and college presidents, and directors of colleges and technical training schools and centers.

Overall, the interviewees were very agreeable and enthusiastic about participating in the study. They were generally very thorough in their responses, and thoughtful and constructive in their recommendations. It was the consensus of the study team that the participants are highly-committed individuals who are knowledgeable about their institutions and are dedicated to the promotion of education and the region.

At the conclusion of all the interviews, all data was collapsed into a single set of files and coded for interpretation. The coding process revealed a number of consistent beliefs and themes among the interviewees. Below is overview of the key stakeholders interviews based on the questions drawn from the interview instrument:

### **Sources of Workforce Information**

#### **1. How does your organization currently gather or receive information about the region's workforce?**

Key stakeholders were asked how they currently receive information about the region's workforce and what type of information they receive. The responses to this questioned varied with some respondents having multiple sources of regional workforce information and others obtaining very little. The most frequently cited sources of information about the region's workforce were as follows:

- ✓ Workforce Development Boards (Southwest Florida and Cape Coral)
- ✓ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- ✓ Employer and Business Advisory Groups
- ✓ Local Economic Development Offices (EDOs)

Other sources included the local newspapers, professional journals, local Chambers of Commerce, News-Press Market Watch, Enterprise Florida, Florida Department of Economic Opportunities (DEO), and various job sites, including targeted industries.

*What type of information do you receive?*

The interviewer followed up this question with asking the respondents about the type of information that they receive. Generally most of the respondents did not receive in-depth information regarding critical employment or skills gaps in the region's workforce. Most frequently the respondents cited they receive information on "employment vacancies" followed by some information regarding specific positions and/or desired skills of positions gathered from advisory groups in specific content areas; e.g., health, business, etc., at the universities, colleges, and technical centers.

*How often does your organization receive the regional and local workforce information?*

The Key Stakeholders from local universities and colleges, as well as technical schools stated that they generally receive the workforce information on the region annually and semi-annually, although several stated that they receive some monthly updates, most of which came from the monthly meetings of their Advisory Groups or from job postings of employment vacancies.

**2. What organizations provide labor force information or studies for your planning or development?**

Key stakeholder respondents cited a number of sources that provide information for their program planning and development. Similar to the first question, the Workforce Development Board; Bureau of Labor Statistics; local economic development offices; and employer or business advisory groups were the most common sources of labor force information for their planning or development. Other organizational sources included:

- ✓ Local Job Sites
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Professional Journals
- ✓ State Databases

In addition, several organizations cited specific sites that they used as sources of this information. The two most common sites (noted 2 or more times cited) were:

- ✓ Occupational Information Network or O\*NET, ([www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org))
- ✓ Burning Glass, ([www.burning-glass.com](http://www.burning-glass.com))

Although multiple sources were used in the organization's program planning and development, it appeared that most of the information that was used gave more of a broad overview of workforce needs (state and national), while specific local information was not as readily available or was much more anecdotal in nature.

Technical schools and colleges tapped into multiple organizations for labor force information for their planning and development, while this was less the norm for the region's school systems.

**3. Does your organization conduct research studies or labor force analysis?**

As a group, most of the interviewed Key Respondents do not conduct regular research studies or labor force analysis. Generally the universities, colleges, and technical schools rely on data and studies performed by other groups outside their organization; e.g., Workforce, Horizon Council, advisory groups, key employers, etc. Existing labor force information will often be used to complete a program needs assessments for new or expanding program request. For those that did conduct research studies, the most common means was focus groups with advisory and employment groups, or through surveys of alumni and employers of graduates of the program.

**4. Do you have an employer or business advisory group or groups that provide input on your programs and curriculum?**

On the whole, most of the interviewed stakeholders said that they have employer or business advisory groups that they solicit and from whom they gather input and information for their program development and curriculum. These advisory groups were most often program or discipline specific, and were therefore at the program level. In the K-12 schools, these groups were primarily in the technical centers and specialty programs (e.g., Health Occupations Advisory Board), and were most often absent in the general K-12 academic programs within the school system.

**5. Are there other alliances or business contacts that provide labor force information?**

The respondents cited several other alliances or business contacts that provided information outside the formal information chain. Some of these were

- ✓ Key Employer Groups; e.g., Lee Memorial for Health Programs
- ✓ Alliance of Educational Leaders
- ✓ Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF.org)
- ✓ Corporate Headquarters (this was especially true for branch campuses)
- ✓ Professional Associations
- ✓ Bio-Florida
- ✓ Private Marketing Companies
- ✓ Internships, apprenticeships (visits by teachers and students to businesses )
- ✓ Teacher's Emersion Programs

**6. What additional regional and local labor force information would you like to obtain?**

The respondents were very vocal on this question. Most often cited the need to better understand the regional labor market trends and information on the skills, knowledge, and tasks of the jobs needed to fill employment gaps identified. The information pertaining to new ventures and companies moving to the area and/or expansion plans for existing companies would be helpful. This was followed by information that could specify what skill areas were needed. Below is list of some of the most frequently-cited responses:

- ✓ Industry and occupational growth areas (trends and projections)
- ✓ Occupational Skills, knowledge, and tasks
- ✓ New ventures and/or new companies information (relocations)
- ✓ Companies expansion plans, requests for new hires
- ✓ Indicators of job skills (blue and white collar)
- ✓ Needs of different sizes of business (not only large companies but small companies)

The respondents were also asked: *How often would you like to see the labor force information updated?* Most of the respondents, regardless of institution type (university, college, technical school, or K-12) said this information would be nice to have quarterly or no later than semi-annually.

## **Value of Workforce Now Initiative**

### **7. Are you familiar with the current Workforce Now Initiative?**

A key question for the Key Respondents was their knowledge of the Workforce Now initiative. We found, overwhelmingly that the respondents were familiar with the Initiative. In fact, of all the respondents, only one showed some vagueness to what Workforce Now is and what the focus of the research initiative is.

In explaining the detail of the initiative to the key stakeholders, the interviewer asked the respondents *if they had or were planning any of the occupational types that were presented in the first two reports.* Of the position types, *IT Business Analysis, IT Technicians*, and positions in *hospitality and resort management* were the most frequently cited by the universities, colleges, and technical centers where they have existing programs. Two of the Key Respondents from private university stated that as a result of the Workforce Now previous studies, they have modified and created programs in IT to meet the needs of Southwest Florida Employers in the future. In addition, one of the technical centers is embarking on CNC training with corporate support to provide skilled employees to this key company in the region.

In regard to the other employment gap concerns identified in the previous Workforce Now reports, some of the Technical Centers have programs such as pre-machinery, and construction technology in addition to Microsoft certifications, customer



service, and hospitality programs but overall, there appeared to be less focus on the following positions:

- ✓ Supply chain management
- ✓ CNC-Robotic Machinery/Robot Operators
- ✓ CNC/Robot Programmers
- ✓ Compliance/regulatory bank professionals
- ✓ Skilled Construction Trades
- ✓ Construction Supervisors

The interviewer also spoke of the **Fundamental Workforce Skills** that were identified in the initial two reports:

- Active listening
- Critical thinking
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Reading comprehension
- Finance and basic business mathematics

After presenting these skills, the interviewer asked the key stakeholders if they felt these skills needed strengthening and about the level of importance of each of these skills.

Overwhelmingly, all the participants stated that all of these skills “need to be strengthened” and that they ranked them all very highly. Highest ranking from the participants, regardless of type of institutions, were *critical thinking* and *communication* (active listening).

**8. Have you seen, read, or reviewed the first two Workforce Now research reports released in March and April and how do you plan to use the regional workforce reports developed by the Workforce Now initiative?**

Almost all the Key Respondents said that they had seen and read the two Workforce Now Reports released in March and April. Some stated that they had not read them in depth, while others stated that they passed on the reports to others. Most said that they found the information in the reports of critical importance. In the case of branch campuses, they said that they read the reports and recognizing its value, they passed them on to their respective corporate headquarters.

In regard to how they plan to use the reports, several said that they plan to incorporate the reports in the program and curriculum planning. In fact, two of the universities have said that they have already used the reports to make changes in their curricula for next year.

When asked: *Would you attend or would someone in your organization attend a forum once a year such as the Educational Summit (WORKFORCE SUMMIT) where the annual studies and selected industries or occupations are highlighted?* The respondents said that they definitely would attend. Several said that they plan on sending more than one person from their respective organizations to future summits.

**9. The Workforce Now initiative is designed to help provide current and projected trends on the regional workforce and to enhance and NOT duplicate current workforce studies.....**

***Do you have any other suggestions or comments on the Workforce Now research process or findings?***

The key respondents had a number of suggestions and comments on enhancing the initiative and add to the research. These include the following:

- ✓ Provide a better understanding of skills, knowledge, and tasks of occupations
- ✓ More timely overviews of regional labor market trends
- ✓ Add online forums for discussion of Workforce Now findings
- ✓ Emphasize current needs including the “needs of smaller employers”
- ✓ Create links between hiring agents (employer HR) and career centers at school
- ✓ Contrast between online and classroom students
- ✓ Provide details on training program availability
- ✓ Share Best Practices on using workforce for program planning
- ✓ Focus on specific needs of technical centers
- ✓ Add parents to the circle to guide students in terms of choosing the right occupation for them.

### **Limitations or Impediments to Changing Educational Programs**

**10. Do you feel that your organization can use this new Workforce Now information along with other sources of information to modify or develop educational programs, and how long does it take to modify or enhance an existing educational program?**

Key Respondents across all the areas (university, college, technical, and K-12), stated that they feel that the Workforce Now information could be used to modify and develop educational programs. As noted earlier, several of the private universities stated that they have already used the information for the program offerings for next year.

Although the Key Respondents stated that the time to modify or enhance an existing program varied, public institutions said it takes 2-3 years, while private entities reported that they could modify or change existing programs in one-half this time. In addition, several of the Key Respondents, especially those associated with public entities, stated that legislative action may be required to offer a new program and not surprisingly, they highlighted that one of the biggest barriers is funding, especially of the capital required to start new programs.

**11. What would allow your organization to be more responsive to the region's changing workforce needs and can you provide the "Top Five Changes" that would allow your organization to respond to workforce changes?**

Overall the Key Respondents had much to say about this question and changes that would allow their organizations to be more responsive to workforce changes.

Some of these are as follows:

- ✓ Knowledge of marketability of new educational program areas
- ✓ Sustainability of the programs (long-term demand for a program)
- ✓ Development and turn-around rate to develop program (get a program started and to market)
- ✓ Current placement needs
- ✓ Trends (now and in the future)
- ✓ Better communication across schools and businesses
- ✓ Autonomy (able to do things to meet current and future needs)
- ✓ Concise, easy to read, regular updates on the labor market and employment gaps
- ✓ Data and documentation;
- ✓ More strategic approach to regional educational development
- ✓ Ratio of industry certifications and placement rates
- ✓ Best practices (shared across entities)
- ✓ Flexibility and reduced paperwork and reporting; and
- ✓ Increased funding (build new buildings for new programs and hire new faculty)

The respondents were also asked if any of *these items and changes require legislative action*. Generally, most said some legislative action would be required; the areas that were identified as requiring legislative action most often were "student aid" and other "funding for students." In addition, it was cited, especially by the public entities, that funding would potentially be needed for new buildings and to hire new faculty. The key respondents did cite limitations that they all felt, including lack of funding or money to develop capital infrastructure and/or to hire staff and faculty to add and build programs to meet the needs of businesses and organizations in the

region. Others stated that some of these changes would deviate from the mission of the university, while university branch campuses stated that they were not able to make changes without approval from the corporate headquarters. Many of the Key Respondents noted that their institutions have accreditation requirements that must be met when adding or modifying programs. Finally, one of the Key Respondents commented that parents, especially with young adults, were part of the challenges for students to choose the right occupation based on the skills that they had. Currently, parents have been programmed by school advisors and others to want their children to go to colleges. Therefore, it would raise the question, that postsecondary technical centers or vocational schools might want to change into technical or vocational colleges. A brief review of the name given to postsecondary technical and vocational educational centers showed that a number of other states use the designation of “college” as opposed to centers or schools.

## **SUMMARY**

In closing, the Key Respondents were very receptive to being interviewed and very excited and enthusiastic about the Workforce Now initiative. In addition to giving their time for the interviews, they frequently provided information on programs that their university, school, college, or center were currently engaged in that supported Workforce Now or similar efforts to understand the future workforce needs of the region.

The interviewers found that the Key Respondents were dedicated to their institutions and to their students and customers. In addition, the interviewers found

that the Key Respondents were committed to producing graduates of their programs that would not only find gainful employment but would meet the workforce needs of the region now and in the future.

Although this study provides a good overview of select Key Respondents to the Workforce Now Initiative, it represents a sampling of interviews with Key Respondents from our region's educational institutions. Therefore, it does not capture nor encompasses all the programs and efforts that are conducted in educational centers within our region.

# APPENDIX 1

## Workforce Information Questionnaire for Educational Community

### Interview Contact Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewers \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewers \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewers \_\_\_\_\_

### Sources of Workforce Information

12. How does your organization currently gather or receive information about the **region's workforce**?

Do you receive information on regional and local:

- a. Employment vacancies?
- b. Critical employment gaps (difficult positions to fill)?
- c. Desired skills or skills assessment by position and overall?
- d. Desired employee characteristics?
- e. Labor market studies (annual)?
- f. Other \_\_\_\_\_ define?

13. How often does your organization receive the regional and local workforce information?

- a. None
- b. Monthly
- c. Quarterly
- d. Semi-annually
- e. Annually
- f. Every couple of years
- g. Every three to five years
- h. Other \_\_\_\_\_

14. What organizations provide labor force information or studies? for your planning and program development? (check all that apply)

- a. Educational Consultants
- b. Employ Florida Marketplace
- c. Employer or Business Advisory Group
- d. Local Economic Development Office
- e. Other Alliances or Business Contacts
- f. Regional College or University
- g. SW Florida Workforce Development Board
- h. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- i. Other, Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

15. Does **your organization** conduct research studies or labor force analysis?

If yes, Can you explain the process and scope? (explanation of any type of regional labor force research study process and scope)?

16. Do you have an employer or business advisory group or groups that provide input on your programs and curriculum?

If yes, Can you explain the process and scope?

17. Are there other alliances or business contacts that provide labor force information?



18. What additional regional and local labor force information would you like to obtain? Explain. (PROBE: Be sure to understand the timing and depth of information desired).
19. How often would you like to see the labor force information updated? Annual? Bi-annual? (How would this information fit into their planning process?)

## **Value of Workforce Now Initiative**

20. Are you familiar with the current Workforce Now Initiative? Yes or NO and record response.

Let me highlight some of the findings:

The studies identify the top five critical positions by regional companies or business sectors. The first two-studies found:

- i. Need for more Supply-Chain Management knowledge and experience;
  - ii. Need for more IT business Analysts across most companies and business sectors;
  - iii. Need for IT Infrastructure Technicians with certifications in applications provided by Microsoft, Oracle, and Cisco;
  - iv. Need for CNC and Robot machine operators and programmers;
  - v. Understanding of FDA, ISO, and health care regulations for jobs in manufacturing and health care;
  - vi. Need for compliance and regulatory bank professionals;
  - vii. A projected need for skilled construction trades such as plumbers, carpenters, or construction supervision; and
  - viii. Need for hospitality and resort management and customer-service positions.
21. Does your organization provide training in any of the above areas? Explain. (be sure to capture current programs as well as planned programs) Do you plan on providing this need in the near future?
1. Supply Chain Management
  2. IT Business Analysts
  3. IT Infrastructure Technicians
  4. CNC-Robotic Machinery/Robot Operators

5. CNC/Robot Programmers
6. Compliance/regulatory bank professionals
7. Skilled Construction Trades
8. Construction Supervisors
9. Hospitality & Resort Management
10. Hospitality and Resort Customer Service

In addition, the Workforce Now Initiative research found a:

- a. Desire of key regional businesses to work with education organizations including tours, internships, school programs as a way to expand bridges between business and education;
- b. Fundamental workforce skills that need strengthening include:
  - i. Active listening
  - ii. Critical thinking
  - iii. Teamwork
  - iv. Problem solving
  - v. Reading comprehension
  - vi. Finance and basic business mathematics

22. How important is a regional assessment of fundamental workforce skills listed above?

- a. Not important
- b. Slightly important
- c. Important
- d. Very Important
- e. Critical

23. How do you plan to use the regional workforce reports developed by the Workforce Now initiative?

24. Would you attend or would someone in your organization attend a forum once a year such as the Educational Summit (WORKFORCE SUMMIT) where the annual studies and selected industries or occupations are highlighted?

25. Have you seen, read, or reviewed the first two Workforce Now research reports released in March and April? Yes or NO

If YES....

- a. How useful are the reports? Explain (provide copies or executive summaries if needed)

- b. How do you plan to use the reports?
- c. Do the reports provide actionable information on the regional labor force?
- d. What additional information would you like to receive in regional workforce reports?

26. The Workforce Now initiative is designed to help provide current and projected trends on the regional workforce and to enhance and NOT duplicate current workforce studies.

Do you have any other suggestions or comments on the Workforce Now research process or findings?

## **Limitations or Impediments to Changing Educational Programs**

27. Do you feel that your organization can use this new Workforce Now information along with other sources of information to modify or develop educational programs?

28. How long does it take to modify or enhance an existing educational program?  
Explain.

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 up to 2 years
- c. 2 years up to 3 years
- d. 3 years up to 4 years
- e. 4 years up to 5 years
- f. Longer than 5 years

29. What would allow your organization to be more responsive to the region's changing workforce needs?

List any limitations or impediments to providing new programs or modifying existing programs or degrees.

30. Can you provide the **TOP FIVE CHANGES** that would allow your organization to be more responsive to workforce changes?

31. Do any of these changes require legislative action? Explain.