

Education and Industry Consortium

Program Year 26 – First Quarter Meeting

Date: September 24, 2025

Time: 11:02 AM – 11:59 AM

Location: In-person/Zoom – 1112 North Main St. Gainesville, FL 32601

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 AM by Brent Ferns, serving as Interim Co-Chair in the absence of Consortium Chair Lisa Anderson.

II. Attendance

Consortium Members Present:

- Brent Ferns
- Sean McLendon
- Shawn Holmgren
- Sara Maxwell
- Dr. Laura Guyer
- Tracey Higdon
- Anita Rembert
- Jonathan Leslie
- Emily Mecusker (representing Mike Ripplinger)
- Cathy Tyler (representing Ryan Wilder)

CareerSource North Central Florida Staff:

- Phyllis Marty
- Karen Davis
- Christina Brown
- Diane Burke

- Jessica McCrae
- Alex Ganz
- Bethany Gaffey (Scad Media)
- Elora Duong (Scad Media)

Guests/Public:

- Shannon Ritter (Guest)
 - Stew Lilker (Public Attendee)
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III. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Sean Mclendon | Second: Anita Rembert | Outcome: Approved unanimously

IV. Approval of Minutes (June 18, 2025)

Motion: Shawn Holmgren | Second: Sean Mclendon | Outcome: Approved unanimously

V. Introductions

Consortium members and attendees introduced themselves and shared updates on their respective roles and contributions.

- **Shawn Holmgren** discussed workforce training initiatives in **drones and robotics**.
 - **Sara Maxwell** announced plans for a **new distribution center** requiring approximately **150 new hires**.
 - Other attendees highlighted priorities in **economic development** and **healthcare workforce needs**.
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VI. Quarterly Report Highlights

- **Labor Market Shifts:** Technological advancements and changing workforce expectations are shaping regional employment needs.

- **Providing Service to the Underserved:** Prior discussion regarding rural communities who still have trouble accessing the internet or getting to a CareerSource office, and how we have resources such as the library and new offices being opened in each county we serve.
 - Sean Mclendon asked if there was any quantitative data that we could track from the discussions in the last meeting. These would include: The amount of people served in the new offices, any high demand jobs but limited enrollments, any changes or trends surrounding offerings based on real-time community job demand, and the need in each of the represented communities.
- **Industry Needs:** integrating advanced AI training and how and when to use it properly, technical skills, and essential soft skills among job seekers.
- **Healthcare Sector:** Brent Ferns noted some changes were made in Healthcare Information Technology program since the last meeting, has seen increased enrollment, however that does not guarantee job placements, need further discussion with employers; where they are finding their talent pool, are they training on the job.
 - Laura Guyer discussed the Community Health Worker Program and how employers do not understand where to utilize paraprofessionals, how they can be cost saving to the company, to overall medical billing, and can provide self-sustaining employment in our communities. Additionally, they are an asset as we have a significant amount of rural area within our communities.

VII. Education & Training Discussion

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):**
 - Expansion of CTE opportunities in K–12, with dual enrollment encouraged, and pathways expanding, such as the program currently being developed by Santa Fe “AS in Leadership and Industry” which would provide up to 27 credits for an industry certification/apprenticeship. Gen Eds, such as; Intro to Business and Principles of Management, along with curated courses would be added. This could then flow into the Organizational Management Bachelor’s program, building a true pathway from CTE started in High School through to leadership. Assisting in the replacement of those aging out of the industry into retirement.

- Staffing challenges remain in the trades program, used Alachua County HVAC as an example.
- Concern expressed over the lack of career education at the elementary/middle school level. Shawn Holmgren discussed introducing coding and robotics earlier on. Brent Ferns discussed getting the awareness of the CTEs into middle schools to promote interest.
- **Trades & Apprenticeships:**
 - Strong success reported in new diesel programs and growing student interest in trades.
 - Emphasis placed on building pathways that lead to certifications and career advancement.
 - Apprenticeships are recognized as effective pipelines for future professionals, with partnerships viewed as essential to expansion.
- **Instructor Recruitment:**
 - Challenges hiring qualified instructors for CTE programs.
 - [See VIII. Public Comment] Discussed where to look for talent, how income can be supplemented, and how the case of Alachua's HVAC program facing instructor challenges led to the program evolving, to cover more of the construction trades and open the talent pool for instructors further.
 - Suggested creative solutions include recognizing industry experience in salary schedules to attract teaching talent. At the college level paying higher over the summer months, promoting the summer off period in K-12 as an incentive.
- **Agenda Items Not Reviewed:**
 - With so much discussion on the CTEs there was limited time to get into the discussion on the Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeship or anything after.
 - The Items to review at next Consortium:
 - Which Apprenticeships or Pre-Apprenticeships should be developed or strengthened
 - Where are the most pressing workforce gaps and high-demand occupations.

- What role should our Board play in preparing for AI.
 - What curriculum or training would best support AI integration into education.
 - Where are we falling short on skills.
 - Which soft skills are the most in demand, and how can we better address them.
 - Current educational attainment by county, top 5 industries and median pay by county.
 - Local Targeted Occupation List – Submitted 8/1/25 – demand based submissions (suggestion at the 6/18/25 meeting)
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VIII. Public Comment

Stew Lilker brought up the challenges that are faced due to the current pay scale in the state, specifically in education.

IX. Closing Discussion

The meeting concluded with a focus on strengthening apprenticeship programs and enhancing industry-education partnerships to address workforce needs and talent pipeline development. Only the first part of the agenda was gone over, therefore the remainder will be gone over at the next Consortium Meeting.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 AM.