

The logo for St. Lucie EDC, featuring the text "St. Lucie" above "EDC" and a colorful geometric graphic to the right.The logo for CareerSource Research Coast, featuring a colorful geometric graphic and the text "CareerSource" above "RESEARCH COAST".

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2021 TREASURE COAST SKILLS GAP 2.1

Continuing the Progress

2021 SKILLS GAP STUDY

Continuing the Progress

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2021 Skills Gap 2.1 Study Findings

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The Evolution of the Skills Gap Initiatives

The Skills Gap 2.1 was initiated in January 2021 by the St. Lucie EDC to understand the impact of the COVID pandemic on industry-wide workforce needs and continue the progress from the community efforts following the 2017 and 2019 Skills Gap Studies. With each iteration the community drilled deeper into issues using the knowledge gained by the community efforts undertaken from search previous study, and the new knowledge gained through the current process.

Four themes have emerged across each Skills Gap study to include:



- **Skills** – The flow of talent to the workplace begins with:
 - Development of skills needed in the local economy,
 - Navigating skilled talent to jobs in the industry.
 - Priming the pipeline by integrating skills development and navigating talent strategies to grow the economy by filling jobs.
- **Capacity** – The capacity of educational and training institutes to train the volume of talent identified by industry to fill the open positions that will drive economic expansion. Health Care is an example where the capacity to deliver the number of trained nurses is currently not being met in the community, resulting in hospitals seeking talent from outside of the United States. Resources to deliver trained workers to the workforce is key to economic development.
- **Marketing Careers** – Each Skills Gap study focused on the need to market the career paths to the target audience. While the message across industries might differ, the effort to proactively connect and inform the target audience remains a priority.
- **Leadership/Partnerships** – Leadership and Partnerships are the key to continued development and growth of the talent pipeline across all industries. The St. Lucie EDC has formed the central workforce beacon for the region by working with partners to continue to grow jobs and businesses that hire. The partnerships have subscribed to the understanding that the development of a workforce-ready talent pipeline is a journey not a destination.

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Process

Following a successful Strategic Doing session in February 2020, the onset of the pandemic forced all normal business activities to a halt. In January 2021, the St. Lucie EDC reconvened the strategic partners on the Treasure Coast to assess the impact of the pandemic on the area workforce.

The recommendations outlined in this report were identified based on interviews of 25 area businesses and educational institutes across Health Care, Manufacturing, Marine, and Skilled Trades industries. The Skills Gap 2.0 study released in February 2020 was used as the starting point for the conversations in which we drilled down deeper to identify more granular solutions to address the changes that have occurred because of the COVID Pandemic and ongoing issues.

The development of a workforce-ready talent pipeline is a journey not a destination.

During interviews we discussed some common ground between education and business to further strengthen the understanding that the preparation of talent is a shared responsibility between education, business, and the community. Tim Moore, President, Indian River State College, echoed the sentiment of business leaders when he said *“Education is promptly changing. We can get too academic. We have to think like a business and prepare our students for jobs coming at them.”* (Florida Trend, 2021)



In 2021, the EDC was focused on two targeted hiring initiatives in Marine and Health Care, with Derecktor and Cleveland Clinic, respectively. The Derecktor Fort Pierce Talent Taskforce was developed as a rapid deployment initiative of the St. Lucie EDC to support the immediate hiring needs of Derecktor Fort Pierce. The framework implemented for the Derecktor Fort Pierce Taskforce mirrors the input from the Skills Gap 2.1 study. The partnerships and strategies implemented from this initiative are a microcosm of the needs identified by the larger Marine industry. A focused health care initiative is included in the recommendations outlined in this report.

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Covid Impact

The pandemic changed the way we work, learn, and live. Communication channels have been uprooted in both business and education. Industry has seen the change to virtual connections and remote work. Most enduring is the impact on education. Supply chain disruptions are resulting in production delays along with a sluggish return to the workforce in Marine/Manufacturing and Skilled Trades. Health care is recovering from the stress the pandemic exerted on both the system of care and the health care workers from the pace and volume of patient care. The EDC, working with business, is tasked with integrating the impact of these structural issues of the economy.

The St. Lucie EDC staff pivoted in February 2020 from developing the workforce to securing the workforce with daily communications with partners and the business community providing information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, federal, state, and local governments, business loan programs, non-profit assistance, and food insecurity resources. St. Lucie EDC established a business assistance portal with pertinent COVID-19-related updates and resources, opened the Virtual Business Recovery Center with information and webinars for navigating the Coronavirus pandemic and coordinated a community outreach of 500 Calls in 5 Days to assess the needs of the business community. In addition to assisting businesses impacted by COVID-19, St. Lucie EDC continued its business attraction efforts, expansion projects and programs to enable St. Lucie County's growth. (St. Lucie EDC, 2020)



During the Skills Gap interviews conducted in January through March 2021 the one issue that was identified across all industries as impacting the workforce was the difficulty filling entry level positions due to enhanced unemployment benefits.

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The Overview of Recommendations

The three areas of recommendations are:

1. Prime the Talent Pipeline
2. Marketing
3. Communication & Leadership

There are two key factors that will impact the outcome of a community driven talent pipeline framework and increase the flow of qualified talent to the workforce – the environment in which conversations are conducted and ownership and participation.



Environment - The Middle Ground

The Middle Ground concept, introduced in the Skills Gap 2017, (Gehant, 2017) is the environment of mutual respect that the partners – Education, Business, EDC, Government, and Industry – discuss ideas, embrace innovation and change. The rapid deployment of new workforce programs, policies, and practices, is the result of such collaborative deliberations and actions. The economic strength of a region is dependent upon the collective ideas and actions of all partners. Pete Tesch, President St. Lucie EDC recently noted, *“While economic growth and commercial activity are amazing here in St. Lucie, the ‘special sauce’ or secret to our success is the willingness of our people to work together.”*

Shared Ownership - 75/25 Concept

Who is ultimately responsible for preparing talent for the workforce? As noted in each of the previous Skills Gap studies, education was traditionally viewed as the source of trained talent. The rapid changes in technology that are impacting the way we work, and highlighted by the pandemic, requires a strengthening of the partnership between education, business, EDC, government, and industry associations, to proactively respond. The continually changing skills demanded by business become cost prohibitive for education to deliver in the traditional format. Articulation of skills needed by business and career options for graduates will increase flow of talent to open positions.

“The ‘special sauce’ or secret to our success is the willingness of our people to work together” Pete Tesch, President St. Lucie EDC

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If You want to change the outcome, you must change the process.

Educational institution can provide approximately 75% of what students require to be productive on the first day on the job; business provides 25%. Classroom learning is not always sufficient to prepare a graduate for the workforce. Understanding the company mission, product, and processes must be



provided by the business. How to achieve 100% job readiness is the innovation that is demanded in the talent pipeline if change is to occur. Increased business engagement in the classroom, at all levels, will increase student awareness of career opportunities, increase their understanding of skills needed to be successful in the workforce, and understand how classroom learning applies to building a career. Business engagement with education and training systems, from middle to post-secondary education, will strengthen the talent flow through the pipeline.

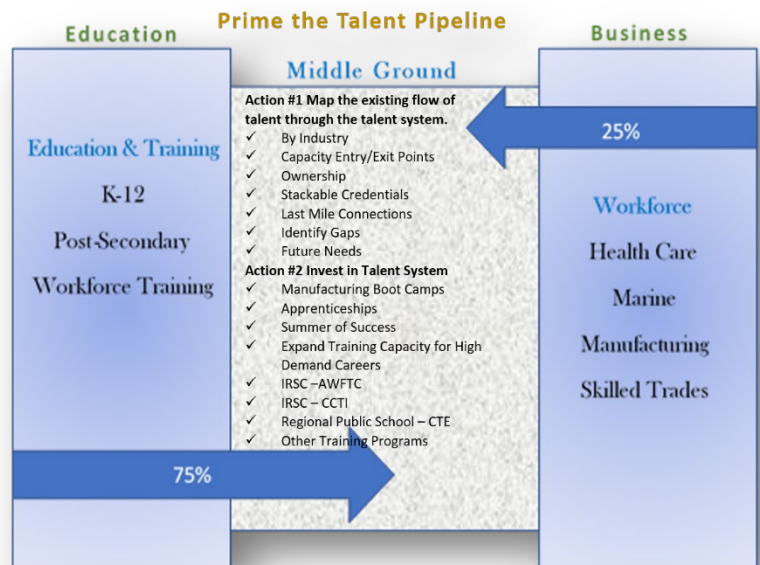
Recommendations

Recommendation #1 - Prime the Talent Pipeline

Priming the talent pipeline requires a full understanding of the regional talent system, (educational and training programs, certifications, and apprenticeship opportunities), by documenting the flow of talent through the programs, the volume of industry recruitment, the needed skills, the entry and exit points, and ownership of each access point in the pipeline. The wide range of talent development needs across the targeted industries in the region and unclear career pathways to the jobs, limits the fundamental driver of regional and economic development – finding a skilled labor force.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

ACTION STEP # 1 - Map the existing flow of talent through the talent system, by industry, capacity, entry & exits points, ownership, degrees & certifications, gaps, and future needs.



- **Industry Recruitment Volume** – Companies need to identify high demand jobs that they plan to fill and define the necessary skills for both current and future needs.

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- **Capacity** – Define the providers and the capacity of training resources including K-12, Career Technical Education (CTE), Post-Secondary institutions, IRSC Corporate & Community Training Institutes (CCTI), IRSC Advanced Workforce Technical Center (AWFTC), and Career Source Research Coast OJT (CSRC), etc.
- **Tracking Entry and Exit Points** – Identify entry and exit points in the talent pipeline that will lead to the development of entry level talent, and the upskilling/reskilling of skilled employees who pursue opportunities to increase skills seeking higher wages.
- **Ownership** – Assign ownership to each access point in the talent pipeline to add accountability. Define engagement partnerships and ongoing communication that furthers the evolution of skills identified.
- **Stackable Credentials** – Identify entry and exits points for obtaining stackable certificates to advance a career that earns a middle-income wage. Outline the expected career path.
- **Degrees & Programs** – Define the career pathways for students who complete post-secondary degrees and graduate from talent initiatives.
- **Last Mile Connections** – Assigning ownership to the exit and entry points in the talent pipeline will address the issue of completing the *last mile* connection between education and the workforce following an interaction with business. In the Skills Gap 2.0 in 2019, both educators and business survey participants discussed the issue of how to connect the student with the job interview after job fairs, classroom session, virtual tours, etc. - the *last mile* connection. Many businesses did not have contact with education and many students fell through the cracks after talent events. Generation Z and Millennials respond to different hiring strategies than older generations currently in the workplace. Students and potential new hires will require different strategies to complete the *last mile* in the hiring process.
- **Identify the Gaps** – The gaps in the talent pipeline will be more evident once the existing connection points are known in greater detail.
- **Future Needs** – Identifying future needs by industry will allow for planning and development of training resources. Marine, Health Care & Biomedical, and Logistics industries in the region are expanding and will require an expanded workforce not just a replacement workforce.



Marine

Marine – Derecktor is revitalizing the Port of Fort Pierce and will need to fill 170 positions over the next 2 years. Malibu Boats, parent company of Maverick and Pursuit, currently employs approximately 1,000 workers. The boating industry is currently seeing strong demands for boats and will require a continue flow of talent to replace the skilled labor retiring and to account for normal attrition and planned expansions. (Florida Trend, 2021)

Manufacturing

Manufacturing – At the start of the pandemic, manufacturers laid off large portions of their labor force. Many of the skilled labor were able to enter other industries. Entry level

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talent moved on to other careers as well and were not available when manufacturers began to rehire. Now that manufacturing is returning, there is a shortage of talent combined with the negative image of manufacturing impacts hiring. The Advanced Workforce Technical Center is viewed as a critical source for future talent in this and other industries. The enhanced unemployment benefits were cited as a reason for having difficulty filling entry level positions.

Health Care

Health Care – Cleveland Clinic Tradition has doubled in size with 1,000 employees along with the planned expansion of the Neuroscience and Stroke program, creating new jobs. Lawnwood Regional Medical Center and Heart Institute, owned by HCA, employs over 1,600 health care professionals and is undertaking a 92,000-sq. ft. expansion to be completed in 2023. Cleveland Clinic Florida Research, and Innovation Center will be partnering with FIU on research employing 14 scientists and 22 support staff. St. Lucie Medical Center employs about 1,100. (Florida Trend, 2021).

Skilled Trades

Skilled Trades – With remote working, people are more willing to work farther from work which is boosting the demands for new housing and home renovations. This increases the demand for the skilled trades including plumbing, electrical, HVAC, masonry, roofing, painting, suppliers, and other trades. The negative stereotype of the Skilled Trades industry is a barrier to finding the talent to replace both expanded needs and retiring skilled trade persons. (Florida Trend, 2021)

Logistics

Logistics – Amazon established its first delivery center in the Treasure Coast region earlier this year in Fort Pierce, serving as last-mile delivery to local customers. Amazon is currently leasing a 60,000-sq.ft. warehouse and distribution facility and employs over 500 full-time and part-time team members. In addition to the fulfillment center operations, the Amazon project created seven small, privately owned businesses within the Delivery Service Partner program employing over 500 full-time and part-time drivers. In 2019 Amazon added 500 new jobs with a total workforce of 1,243. (EDC, 2019)



Cheney Brothers is family-owned Florida company that has chosen Legacy Park at Tradition in Port St. Lucie as the home for its newest state-of-the-art distribution center, a 427,000-sq.-ft, \$55 million facility. The new Cheney Brothers Port St. Lucie location will bring 380 jobs to the area with wages that exceed St. Lucie County's average by approximately 35%. (St. Lucie EDC, 2020)

FedEx is a Fortune 500 company providing customers and businesses worldwide with a broad portfolio of transportation, e-commerce, and business services. The company is

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establishing a new ground service regional sortation facility in Port St. Lucie which accelerates package processing per hour and quicker delivery to regional businesses and residential customers. The facility is slated for 245,000 sq. ft. on 22 acres along I-95 in Legacy Park at Tradition and is being developed by the Sansone Group. This new FedEx Ground facility includes a capital investment of more than \$44 million and the creation of 40 full-time and 450 part-time jobs. (St. Lucie EDC, 2020).

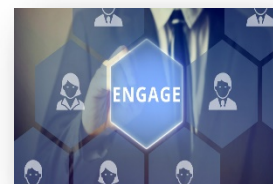
Walmart Distribution Center with 890 employees, has been a participant in the early Boot Camps and seeks to participate in the Logistics Apprenticeship Program.

Documentation of the talent pipeline that has been ongoing, to different degrees, by Health Care, Manufacturing/Marine, and Skilled Trades through educational, industry associations, EDC, and government partnerships can be the starting point of this recommendation. The groundwork undertaken by industry associations, in concert with education, is available to jump start this recommendation.

Exploration of Reasons to Map the Talent Pipeline

Mapping the talent pipeline is a core function of understanding the flow of talent to the workforce and the identification of where we need to strengthen the flow beginning at the earliest opportunity in kindergarten and carries through to graduation. The knowledge of the regional career pathways varies by industry.

One model for mapping the talent pipeline is a partnership between the Bowling Green Area Chamber Foundation, the Bowling Green Independent School District, Warren County Public Schools, and local businesses was developed to ensure that future graduates succeed in their careers. The website [South Central Kentucky Learning About Unique and New Careers](#) (Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, 2017) focuses on the different target audiences – businesses, students & parents, education. The efforts already undertaken in the Treasure Coast region will slide right into this model.



Health Care has a predictable pathway with defined programs and certifications that will lead to a wide range of familiar jobs. The career path for a range of nursing careers is readily available through educational programs, career centers, Bureau of Labor Statistics¹.

Manufacturing and Marine jobs overlap skill sets and certifications, with Marine requiring a range of industry specific skills. For example, welders and fabricators, marine mechanics, marine carpenters,

¹ [Nursing Careers](#)

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shipfitters and exterior paint specialists overlap to some degree with manufacturing, although the specific Marine skills are not taught locally. The Marine industry career path to jobs is a struggle to communicate because of the limited number of defined occupations or certifications. The special Derecktor initiative initiated in March of 2021 included support for the approval of the Marine Yacht Technician Apprenticeship and the Marine Pre-Apprenticeship in St. Lucie Public Schools.

The Skilled Trades have defined occupations and certifications, but this knowledge is not easily available to the students or the people looking to enter the construction and Skilled Trades workforce. In general, Manufacturing, Marine, and Skilled Trades suffer from a poor image and require an increase in marketing of the career pathways.

During the interviews, several themes emerged to increase the flow of talent across industries and address the lack of documented career pathways and available certifications.

- **Retraining talent seeking a career change** – The discussions in both interviews and other community workforce forums were on retraining Hospitality workers who were the hardest hit by the pandemic, for a range of positions including marketing, customer service skills, mechanical and maintenance workers to enter Health Care, Manufacturing, Marine and Skilled Trades.
- **Focus on skills** – Employers in Manufacturing/Marine, and Skilled Trades reported an interest in building a talent pipeline with people from different industries focusing on mechanical aptitudes, veterans, and crossover skills. Employers were committed to providing training to experienced workers on company specific products.
- **Crossover skills** – This is the big takeaway from the current Treasure Coast Skills Gap Study 2.1. During the interviews multiple employers mentioned the need to seek talent across industries with skills that can apply in different industries such as aircraft and auto mechanics crossing over to marine technicians with some training. Marketing campaigns should include advertising the opportunities for skilled individuals to change industries.

The Changing Workforce

The talent pipeline will require ongoing attention and updating to accommodate the rapid deployment of initiatives in response to market conditions, unforeseen events such as the pandemic, and demographic changes. Understanding the talent flow will provide greater opportunities to identify issues sooner and develop solutions in response to the changes. Demographic changes will continue to impact the talent pool. The Baby Boomer generation is retiring sooner than later, increasing the gap in talent because millennials lack the needed work experience. There are not enough Gen X workers to fill the shortage. (Monster, 2021). This will impact the target



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industries with Health Care having the greatest impact on the quality of life of the community.

The U.S. population is aging. Today, there are more than 46 million adults aged 65 and older living in the U.S. By 2050, that number is expected to grow to almost 90 million. Between 2020 and 2030 alone, the time the last of the baby boom cohorts reach age 65, the number of older adults is projected to increase by almost 18 million. This means by 2030, 1 in 5 Americans is projected to be 65 years old and over. A quarter of the population of St. Lucie County is aged 65 older. With an aging population comes an increasing need for healthcare, long-term care, and social services to support older adults.²

Health Care has been reporting difficulty filling open positions since the 2017 Skills Gap Study and the issue is magnified by the increase in nurses and other health care professionals leaving the workforce following burnout from the pandemic.

Studies (Nurses, 2021) found that 20% of its National Nurses Associations (NNAs) members reported an increased rate of nurses leaving the profession in 2020. And 90% are concerned about the high rates of intention to leave the field. The ratio of new hires to experienced nursing professionals is also expected to increase to approximately 50% of the workforce over the next five years. Compounding the future of the talent pool is the high rate of turnover within the first year. New employees find the work is more challenging than expected, and have a lack of experience with failure, and have a fear of being disciplined or offered correction³.



Compounding the hiring gap is the deficit of training resources to match the number of students applying to nursing and other healthcare programs. In a recent Health Care Roundtable, the number of vacancies in area health care facilities exceeded the number of graduates entering the workforce. Health care providers are seeking staffing from international sources to address the shortage.

Mapping the talent pipeline for the targeted industries as described above will increase the ability of the community to begin to address the talent shortage in the industries.

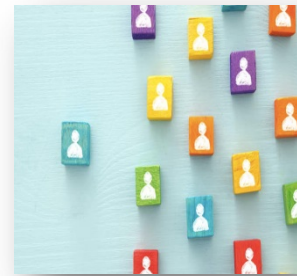
ACTION STEP #2 – Invest in training programs that feed the Talent Pipeline – Continue building the programs that are part of the talent pipeline through the development programs that respond to both the immediate and future staffing needs.

² [RHIhub website](#), Demographic Changes and Aging.

³ Source – internal study conducted by member of Health Care Roundtable discussion, May 20, 2021.

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The region has been building such programs since 2017 in response to the talent needs of the businesses in the St. Lucie region. The programs have been designed to increase the engagement between the business and students, increasing student's knowledge of local career options, engagement with students earlier in the pipeline highlighting needed skills. The following programs have been identified during the interviews as effective candidates for continued support or expansion.



HEALTH CARE

The Health Care industry, a major economic engine in the St. Lucie area, requires a dynamic Career & Talent Pipeline to maintain the flow of talent into the high skilled jobs, has been negatively impacted by the pandemic with increased retirements and career changes. The career path is defined for some health care positions, such as nursing, however there is a lack of clarity for the specialty jobs such as Surg Tech, Central Sterile Tech, Labor and Delivery. The expected high turnover rates in patient care positions combined with the lack of training resources, will create recruitment challenges for health care employer. Health Care providers have active partnerships with regional universities and college to recruit talent as evidenced in the Health Care Roundtable. As noted above, the demand for health care professionals at all levels of the patient care and research will only increase over the next 5 years and a strategy to prime the health talent pipeline consists of both capacity to train and students willing to enter the field. [IRSC](#) and [Keiser](#) are major providers of health care training and each has a waiting list for nursing programs. The capacity to meet the demand for nursing will continue to be an issue without intervention. The expansion of the Biotech Industry and research centers in the region will also require seeking solutions to filling positions expected to open over the next several years.

If you want to change the outcome, you must change the process. Rethinking how talent is prepared for the workforce, the understanding of utilization of skills that cross over industry, and the recruitment process are areas of great opportunity. Tim Moore said, "We have to think like a business and prepare our students for jobs coming at them." (Florida Trend, 2021)

MANUFACTURING/MARINE AND SKILLED TRADES

- ✓ **Manufacturing/Construction Boot Camps** – A recommendation in the 2019 Skills Gap Study included the use of the Career Exploration Boot Camp model to increase job readiness and knowledge of businesses. The St. Lucie Manufacturing Boot camp was the first boot camp initiated in 2018 and has been successful in introducing high school graduates to careers in Manufacturing and Marine industry. In 2021 the Manufacturing Boot camp will be joined with the Skilled Trades Boot Camp and a Manufacturing Boot Camp in Indian River County that will also focus on high school graduates, expanding graduates' awareness of high demand careers in the region.

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- ✓ **Apprenticeships** – Apprenticeships are designed to develop useful job skills in individuals entering the work force. The curriculum for industry-specific apprenticeship programs offered on the Treasure Coast - Yacht Technician, Industrial Manufacturing Technician, Logistics Apprenticeship - create opportunities for blended classes to create an efficient training delivery system.
- ✓ **CareerSource Research Coast** creates and manages a workforce development service delivery system responsive to the needs of businesses and career seekers. Programs developed specifically to create a career pathway into Manufacturing from high schools include:
 - ✓ **Summer of Success** - Eligible youth attend the Youth Employment Success Solutions (YESS) training where they will learn valuable skills to help them succeed in the workplace. Those who complete the classroom portion of the program will then participate in an internship where they will earn while they learn.
 - ✓ **Career Website** – This is a developing resource to coordinate access to career videos and resources for high school students as well as entry-level workforce. The development of the site should take into consideration the use of social media sources appropriate for the target audience.
- ✓ **St. Lucie Public Schools Career and Technical Education** currently offers a range of [CTE programs](#) for Health Care, Marine/Manufacturing, and Skilled Trades. Apprenticeships and the expanded pre-apprenticeship programs in Outboard Marine Service Technology at St. Lucie West Centennial High School support the flow of talent into the workforce. These programs are a steppingstone to the workplace or further training at IRSC.
- ✓ **IRSC Advanced Workforce Technical Center (AWFTC)**, the complex is a beacon to the region’s future, offering advanced technology, and leading-edge industry training in specialized technical career fields such as advanced manufacturing; automotive, aviation and marine technology; welding; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The 50,000 sq.-ft. complex on the College’s Massey Campus in Fort Pierce completes a campus “triangle” of advanced learning environments critical for closing the regional skills gap and preparing residents for high-wage, in-demand careers.
- ✓ **Corporate Community Training institute (CCTI)** – Offers customized corporate training & consulting, continuing education for licensure and certification, and personal & professional development. During a recent community forum participants identified the CCTI as a key to providing short term training and certifications that allow for the immediate mobilization of the workforce. CCTI provides a source for obtaining stackable credentials while earning a sustainable income while moving forward (IRSC - Corporate Community Training Institute, 2020)

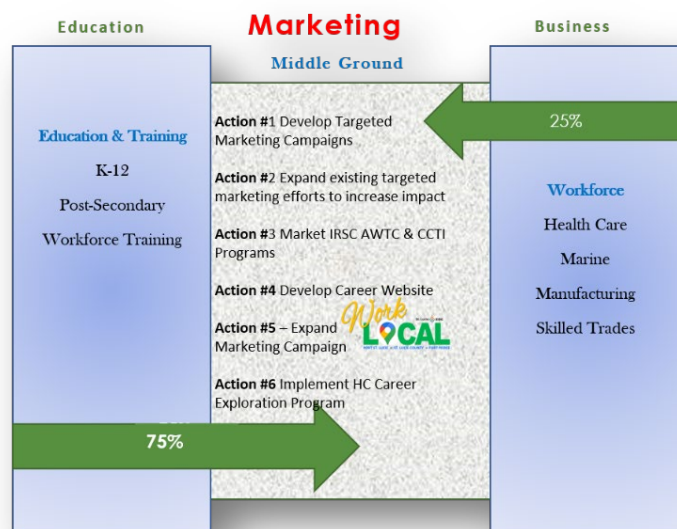


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Recommendation #2 - Marketing

Develop a targeted and focused marketing outreach campaign that articulates the high demand skills, highlights the entry, and exit points, focuses on the high demand jobs, and addresses the lack of knowledge and negative stereotype associated with each industry. The communication strategy should focus on attracting the students/talent to industries & companies, rather than focusing a hiring strategy that waits at the company door to welcome them in.

The EDC has been the acknowledged focal point for bringing together community partners to address workforce issues. The continuation of the EDC as the focal point for marketing efforts for each industry going forward, will provide the coordinated messaging necessary to grow jobs and businesses in the region.



Generational differences in communication styles and use of various tech sources for information, will necessitate coordination of a unified messaging campaign. The *Rule of 7*, one of the oldest in marketing, defines the effective frequency of marketing messages before someone acts is 7 views. A clearly defined marketing strategy that defines the multiple connections with the talent will increase the success of positive results. (Kruse, 2018) Coordinated messaging to targeted populations, that focus on the talent pipeline access points, will increase the effectiveness of the flow of talent to the workforce.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

ACTION STEP #1 – Develop a targeted and focused marketing strategy for recruiting individuals to the *jobs* and *careers* in the targeted industries – Health Care, Marine/Manufacturing and Skilled Trades. Career options and skills needed vary by industry. The targeted audiences overlap, especially at the high school and postsecondary level. The targeted audiences and messaging are multifaceted requiring a range of strategies across industries, community partners, and digital technologies. Recommendations to structure the marketing campaign that were identified during the interviews include:

- ✓ Recruiting across industries for talent with crossover skills.

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- ✓ Marketing to employers the generational differences in communication and onboarding process.
- ✓ Address negative stereotypes and lack of knowledge of career paths by industry.
- ✓ Conduct a local, regional, and national marketing campaign for recruiting qualified and experienced instructors. Without instructors, the training capacity needs of the region will not be met.

ACTION STEP #2 – Expand the existing marketing efforts to focus on targeted audiences of current education and business partnerships.

Continue offering industry tours for students & counselors, school site tours for businesses, career fairs, Career Connect Conference, f/k/a State of the Jobs, and increased business engagement in the classroom.

ACTION STEP #3 – Market Training Opportunities of IRSC Advanced Workforce Technical Center and CCTI.

[The IRSC Advanced Workforce Technical Center](#) will link advanced technology and leading-edge industry training in specialized technical career fields such as advanced manufacturing; automotive, aviation and marine technology; welding; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The Center is critical for closing the regional skills gap and preparing residents for high-wage, in-demand careers.

[CCTI](#) is being reengineered and redesigned to train the workforce to meet the needs of the community and will serve as a critical connection in upskills employees for supervisory positions.

ACTION STEP #4 – Develop a Career Website.

The 2019 Treasure Coast Skills Gap Study 2.0 outlined the development of a Workforce Readiness website that would highlight the many regional resources to include an online career path resource that focuses on the high demand jobs across all industries. The site will connect talent to training and skills development opportunities to learn the skills to enter the workforce. Additionally, that site will assist employees to find resources to up-skill and increase earning potential. The proposed site will contain an array of workforce development information including:

- Regional workforce initiatives and activities
- The career road maps identified by the entry and exit points of the talent pipeline.
- Career assessments and training opportunities.
- Learning resources including videos on high-demand career videos.
- Career news and events in the region.

The challenge is getting your message to the right people.
Pete Tesch, president, St. Lucie EDC

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ACTION STEP # 5 – Expand Work Local Marketing Campaign

St. Lucie County has 69,011 residents who leave the county for work. [The Work Local](#) campaign focuses on bringing the workers back to fill open jobs. (Work Local, 2021). The use of billboards, social media, and other electronic media should continue to engage with this population.



ACTION STEPS 6 – Implement a Health Care Career Exploration Program

The growing health care and biotech clusters in St. Lucie will require a continuous flow of skilled talent to support the expansion (Florida Trend, 2021). Many of the job opportunities in local companies are unknown to the students from the regional colleges. The career paths to higher paying opportunities can be unclear. Students sometimes have difficulty focusing on finding a job leading to a rewarding career before graduation due to the challenges of completing the degree⁴. The Career Exploratory program model, recommended for the Health Care industry, has successfully operated since 2015 as a Tech industry talent incubator, through a partnership between USF and [Tech Data Corporation](#). The [Exploratory Lab Boot Camp](#) is a career development program and talent incubator that introduces students to a wide range of career options while connecting businesses with future talent. The Ex-Lab concept is based on a four-pillar curriculum **defined and delivered by industry**, with the first three pillars focused on industry specific content, while familiarizing students with a wide range of career options that match their interests and skills. The fourth pillar focuses on personal development where students will learn their strengths, communication styles, emotional intelligence, and diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Student learning is focused on teams completing a project, defined by sponsoring companies, that requires the application of program content, with classroom learning. Students leave the program with an expanded knowledge of career options, confidence and understanding of the skills they needed to be successful in the workplace, and knowledge of local career options. Of the over 190 students that have successfully completed the program, 100% learned about new career opportunities they were not aware existed and 100% found that the program impacted in some way their career decisions going forward.



⁴ Recurring comment of students graduating from the Tech Data/USF Exploratory Lab Boot Camp developed to attract students from all degrees to the tech industry.

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Exploration of Reasons for Targeted a Marketing Campaign

Marketing career options and pathways to the high demand jobs in the region has been identified in each Skills Gap study since 2017. The efforts undertaken since 2017 have met with great success, such as the Manufacturing Boot Camp, that was initiated in 2018 and continues in 2021. Scaling programs to impact larger numbers of students is the next challenge. Currently the Manufacturing Boot Camp trains less than 20 students a year. Programs such as the Manufacturing and Skilled Trades Boot Camps and the proposed Health Care Career Exploration Efforts need to expand to increase awareness of the range of career options in Health Care, Marine/Manufacturing and Skilled Trades industries while addressing the negative stereotypes of the industries, identifying viable career options and the training required to design the career path to high paying jobs.



Creating a Career Path Cultural Shift -Throughout the Skills Gap studies the repeated theme was marketing the industries to the upcoming generation. Videos, bus tours, virtual tours, and career exploration boot camps have emerged as tools to begin the cultural shift to accepting the study's targeted industries as a viable career. For Marine/Manufacturing and Skilled Trades, understanding the importance of creating a cultural shift towards the belief and understanding of the skilled nature of many of the positions in the industry is necessary. Several program ideas were offered during the interviews to market the many maligned career fields, such as:

- ✓ Offering tours to employee family members to increase their understanding of the employee job. This begins to establish a connection to the industry and potential for a "tradition" of entering manufacturing. A business owner reported that he has hired 2 sons of one of the welders resulting from family day at the company.
- ✓ Increase tours of area businesses for student influencers – teachers, counselors, parents, others.
- ✓ Incorporate in the campaign the career path options that include starting with certifications, apprenticeships, technical college training, and advanced degrees.

Coordinating the Digital Message - Industry Associations, EDC, Public Schools, and colleges have created a range of videos and information sources describing career options. However, the information is disjointed, appearing across several websites that are not necessarily known to career influencers. The first step is to organize it for the target audiences - counselors, teachers, students, parents.

- a. Consolidate career information into one location (even just links to the sites) including the videos created by different EDC, businesses, education, and industry associations.
- b. Market strategic career paths within the industry explaining that the student can enter the field without a college degree, and with experience and training move into to a supervisor or management position.

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Crossover Skills – Crossover skills were identified in this iteration of the Skills Gap study by several employers. A marketing campaign should focus on the industries that are downsizing and market which skills are transferable to other industries. Companies have reported that they will train qualified talent with the right work ethic, mechanical aptitude, and interest to learn. For example, crossover talent can be recruited into marine careers from the automotive, aviation, and selected area apprenticeship programs. Veterans also are a source of crossover skills into a range of industries, including the marine.

Expectations of Graduates - Interviews with several employers and industry association representatives revealed that employers had unrealistic expectations of new graduates. Several employers suggested marketing to employers the use of different hiring practices to increase the follow through by the applicants. These included:

- ✓ Understanding the lack of experience by the recent graduate.
- ✓ Understanding the need to bring in entry level positions and train them.
- ✓ Understanding the role of business to provide input on curriculum when it is not in sync with the skills needed by business, such as teaching estimating pricing associates with product sales.
- ✓ Changes in HR practices to increase success rates for hiring including calling the applicants multiple times to make sure they show up for interviews.

Understanding the ownership of connection points in the talent pipeline can increase the connection rate of the student with the employer. The Last Mile connection issue was identified in the 2019 Skills Gap Study (Gehant, 2019 Skills Gap Report 2.0, 2020) page 7.



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Recommendation #3 - Communication and Leadership

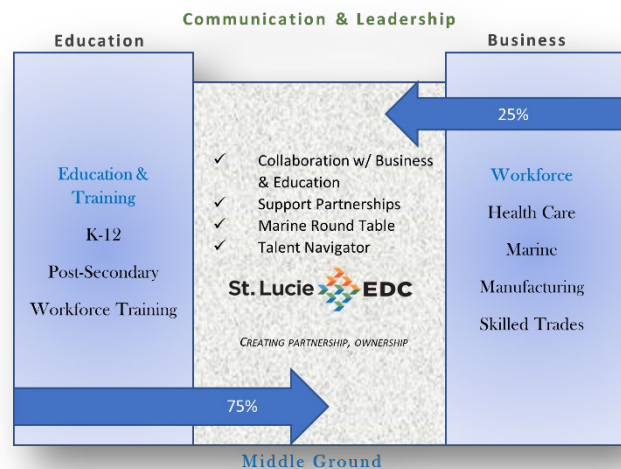
According to the interviews conducted during the 2019 and 2021 Skills Gap studies, the St. Lucie EDC has successfully led the region in identifying workforce issues and bringing together partners to implement solutions to that fill the skills gap since 2017. The St. Lucie EDC has demonstrated the ability to rapidly scale initiatives that support local businesses and industries, such as the Fort Pierce Derecktor Initiative set up in March 2021 that is now expanding to address all Marine companies in the region through the Marine Roundtable.

Job creation, traditionally the focus of an EDC, is a leading indicator of regional economic stability and growth. A skilled talent pool to support the industry growth and a talent pipeline system, with defined entry and exit points, is required to support the EDC's continued business

development to grow the local markets. The mission of the EDC is to create quality jobs and to work proactively with business partners to grow and expand the jobs and the economy.

The St. Lucie EDC again, brought together a wide range of business, educational, and industry partners in January 2021 to understand the impact of the COVID pandemic on workforce needs, while continuing the progress from the community efforts following the 2017 and 2019 Skills Gap Studies.

The issues outlined in the 2019 Treasure Coast Skills Gap Study 2.0 continue to exist. The recommendations in this report require strengthening of existing partnerships to collaboratively building the Talent Pipeline in the region. The following recommendations are intended to *continue the progress*.



RECOMMENDED ACTION

ACTION STEPS # 1 - The St. Lucie EDC continues to provide leadership in strengthening collaboration of community partners to focus on workforce development and talent pipeline system.

The EDC operates as a strategist, identifying opportunities for economic growth, to rapidly scale initiatives to respond to immediate business and industry needs. Therefore, it is a natural role for the EDC, as the owner of the business relationship, to support collaborative initiatives with partners to

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continue the growth of workforce initiatives including the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report. The following are several collaborations that are focused on the target industries.

Marine Roundtable – The EDC and St. Lucie Public Schools initiated a Marine Roundtable in November 2019 but because of COVID had to shut down, restarting the meetings in June 2021. There is a great deal of information shared between community-based workgroups/taskforces/roundtables that identifies gaps in the talent pipeline. The members of the group solve issues as they arise. The community has done a great job of addressing issues identified and establishing networks to share information. The information shared at workforce meetings should be captured and formulated into community solutions that can advocate to the legislature for funding.

Health Care Roundtable – This group self-initiated bi-weekly meetings, following the 2017 Skills Gap study, to address workforce issues across the health care industry. The group is led by Ann Hubbard, Ph.D., Dean of Health Sciences, IRSC, and engages the membership of health care professionals and educators, in the discussion of workforce needs and issues. Every meeting of the Health Care Roundtable produces a list of resources to solve the most recently defined problems. Education and Health work seamlessly share and solve problems. Many of the issues relate to capacity to train new talent to fill open positions. Interested students seeking to enter the health care field are locked out of degree programs because of lack of training resources. Health care providers are seeking foreign staffing services to fill needed positions as well as high paid traveling nurses.

The partnerships that have grown over the past four years are focused on the understanding that building the talent pipeline is a journey not a destination.

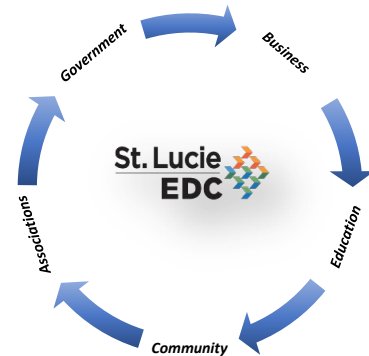
Treasure Coast Manufacturers Association (TCMA) TCMA was established for the purpose of organizing and managing a local and regional manufacturers' trade association, promoting the collective interests of manufacturing, distribution, and wholesale trade companies, advocating public policy, and focusing on mutual areas of concern pertaining to the industry. Visit www.TCMAmfg.com.

TCBA is committed to helping association members meet workforce needs. The Skilled Trades Committee is engaged with key community partners in Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin, and Okeechobee counties to equip workers with the skills they need to succeed. www.TreasureCoastBA.com

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ACTION STEP # 2 - St. Lucie EDC to Coordinate Marketing Campaign Communication

A targeted marketing strategy across industries will require coordination to effectively utilize the marketing resources. The St. Lucie EDC supports all industries and has established connections across the business community. The EDC has successfully led the region in identifying workforce issues and bringing together partners to implement solutions to that fill the skills gap since 2017 and as such is the logical focal point to coordinate the marketing messages for targeted industries.



ACTION STEP # 3 - Implement Talent Pipeline

Navigator Position that supports the documentation and communication of the Talent Pipeline entry and exit points to community workforce partners.

To document the talent pipeline requires dedicated leadership that will focus on the communities expressed need to understand the entry and exit points in the various industry talent pipelines. Designing a Talent Pipeline Navigator position to organize the talent pipeline information and translate the information into employment recruitment and marketing strategies, along with the identification of training needed for high demand jobs, will expand the flow of talent through the pipeline to the workforce. The information generated from the Marine, Manufacturing and Health care Roundtables along with the Workforce Taskforce, will assist in defining the talent pipeline.

The position will document the flow of talent through educational and training programs in the talent pipeline into the workforce by understanding the volume of industry recruitment and the focus of the skill development, tracking the entry and exit points, and assigning ownership of each access point in the pipeline. Currently, the knowledge gained through the industry Roundtables and Industry Association organizational efforts are not universally shared throughout the industry. The task of documenting the Talent Pipeline, enabled by a dedicated staff position, will expand the knowledge of the flow of talent and increase the knowledge to targeted audiences. The information becomes part of the business services and career planning, missions of both IRSC and CareerSource Research Coast.

The position should coordinate with other community partnerships to provide information to assist the community to translate gaps in the talent pipeline.

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Conclusion

The community has demonstrated a commitment to collaborate and embrace changes required to expand the flow of talent through the regional talent pipeline. The many successful programs implemented over the past four years is a testament to the collaborative nature of the area. The recommendation contained in this report represents the ideas from the community that will continue that progress.

Mapping the Talent Pipeline will increase the community knowledge of the entry and exit points for industry specific career pathways, identify training capacity issues, along with an increase in the information to create targeted **marketing** strategies to increase the flow of talent to the workforce. The collaborative nature of the **Leadership and Communication** pathways support the belief that building a talent pipeline is a journey, not a destination, requiring commitment for leadership and shared ownership by both business and education to continue the success of qualified talent flow to the workplace.



For additional information regarding this and other St. Lucie EDC Skills Gap Studies contact:

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