

EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUDIT: LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Prepared for:

**THE HORIZON COUNCIL
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Prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

This education and training audit is the product of a contract between the Wadley Donovan Group (WDG) and the Horizon Council of Lee County, Florida. A companion report: *Labor Market Assessment of Lee County* was submitted separately. Both reports use primary data obtained through surveys of education and training providers, interviews with selected educational institutions and public- and private sector employers, employer surveys, and household surveys. The employer survey gathered information from area employers on the availability, quality and cost of labor, the quality of area training resources, retired residents within the workforce and future labor demands, among other key issues. The household survey results enabled the project team to quantify and profile the area's regular labor force and its hidden labor reserve. The household survey was conducted in collaboration with Younger Associates (YA), based in Jackson, TN, which specializes in business-to-business and business-to-consumer surveys.

The purpose of this document is to present an objective assessment of Lee County's workforce development activities and training systems. In contracting this study, The Horizon Council agreed that the WDG effort would proceed in total objectivity. Accordingly, the findings presented herein are those of WDG only. We have examined Lee County from a corporate perspective and our own knowledge of workforce development and training programs in other areas of the U.S.

To prepare the labor market assessment and this education and training audit, WDG:

- Interviewed approximately 40 representative employers, educators, trainers, and government officials throughout the county.
- Surveyed employers across the region with 20 or more employees (except for retail and government, for which a minimum threshold of 100 employees was used). In August, 2007, the survey was submitted to 1,056 employers in Lee County to obtain data on labor supply, demand for labor, labor quality and labor costs, as well as information on training, recruiting methods, employee benefits and quality of life in the county. 197 employers (18.7%) completed the surveys.
- Surveyed workforce training providers and post-secondary educational institutions in the region. In August, 2007, WDG mailed surveys to 24 workforce training providers and eight post-secondary educational institutions as recommended by the Horizon Council. Surveys were completed and submitted by 12 workforce training providers (50% response) and four post-secondary institutions (75% response).
 - *The responses to this survey are summarized in the workforce training inventory appended to this report.*
- Surveyed in the summer of 2007 a random stratified sample of residents in the age range of 18 to 74 to gather information on employment status, training needs, and income and education levels. A total of 678 surveys were conducted. The survey included a statistically valid, stratified sample of Lee County residents. To achieve the required response rate for statistical validity and to assure a properly statistically stratified sample of all socio-economic and demographic segments of the population, YA conducted the survey using face-to-face interviews at popular retail centers in the county. The survey resulted in a +/- 5% margin of error and a reliability of 95%.
- Prepared and reviewed statistical data on key workforce factors for each of the three commute zones, Lee County, Florida, and the U.S. Research sources include, but are not limited to: the Lee County Economic Development Office; the State of Florida; the U.S.

Bureau of the Census; the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; and the U.S. Departments of Education and Commerce. TETRAD, Inc.—a leading demographic data vendor of Claritas data—was used for 2007 and 2012 demographic, occupational, and related data estimates and projections. WDG used 2005 American Community Survey data (U.S. Census) to supplement the 2007 Claritas data where currently available.

A study of this nature can do no more than describe local conditions. The actual impact of these conditions for any given organizational activity will vary, reflecting the different characteristics and structure of each organization. The consulting team's principal findings and conclusions are recapped in the Executive Summary, followed by a presentation of our findings on the education and training environment, followed by the workforce training inventory appendices.

The Wadley-Donovan Group is the nation's oldest independent management consulting firm that specializes in location consulting and economic development. Its corporate clients include many of the world's leading companies. WDG's economic development practice provides expertise to workforce and economic development agencies and utilities in sales and marketing, strategic planning, database development, overall product development, and assessment. Clients have included Eastern Idaho; Albuquerque; greater Memphis, Huntsville, Knoxville, Tampa; Tulsa; Rochester, NY; Buffalo, NY; Boise, El Paso, Great Falls, Phoenix, Asheville, NC; Conway, AR; Richmond, VA; Tallahassee; Tunica County, MS; FL; Charlotte County, FL; Jackson, TN; and the states of Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, New Jersey, Oregon, Wyoming, Wisconsin, and Maryland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As discussed in WDG's companion report *Labor Market Assessment of Lee County, Florida*, the county has a tight labor-recruiting environment. Employers report labor-market-recruiting challenges, particularly among healthcare, hospitality, information technology, supervisor, and management occupations. Notably, of the 58 occupations for which surveyed employers provided sufficient response, only seven (12%) of the surveyed occupations are available at satisfactory or better levels.

In addition to this shortage, WDG-surveyed employers report a slightly unsatisfactory level of basic skills in verbal communication/comprehension, reading comprehension, math, thinking and judgment/problem solving, and written communications. Among the basic skills, only team and cooperative skills received close to satisfactory employer ratings.

Employers report satisfactory work ethic and productivity among their existing employees, though employer interviews generally indicate the need for improvement. Responding employers report that the fundamental computer skills of applicants for office positions personnel are satisfactory, though they fall short of the skill levels that employers need in fundamental skills, basic keyboard skills, using word processing software, using spreadsheet software, using database software, and accessing and using the Internet. The basic keyboarding skills of manufacturing- and distribution-related job applicants meet employers' needs.

The Horizon Council asked WDG to survey eight post-secondary training and educational institutions in Lee County. These are:

- Barry University
- Edison College
- Florida Gulf Coast University
- Hodges University (formerly International College)
- Lee County High Tech Center Central
- Lee County High Tech Center North
- Nova University
- Southwest Florida College

In addition, the Council asked WDG to survey 24 non-institutional workforce training providers for inclusion in its audit. Providers include:

- Bonita Springs School, Inc.
- Business and Industry Services Lee County School District
- Catholic Hispanic Services
- Charlotte Technical Center
- DATS of the Gulf Coast, Inc. at Fort Myers
- ECC/Displaced Homemakers Program
- FGCU, Small Business Development Center

- Florida Academy of Massage and Skin Care
- Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida, Inc.
- Heritage Institute
- Key Power and Associates, Inc.
- LARC
- Lee County Human Services
- Literacy Council of Bonita Springs
- Literacy Volunteers of Lee County, FL
- Quality of Life Center
- Salvation Army, Educational Resource Center
- Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board
- Sunstate Academy
- The Training Domain, Inc.
- Tri-County Apprenticeship Academy, Inc.
- Unity Gain Recording Institute
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Dr. Piper Center for Social Services, Inc.

Services provided by the eight post-secondary educational institutions are summarized in Table 1. As seen below, all institutions except Southwest Florida College offer adult continuing education programs. Barry University, Edison College, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Lee County School District's High Tech Centers Central and North provide customized training for employers. Vocational/technical training programs are offered at Edison College, Florida Gulf Coast University, Lee County High Tech Centers Central and North, Nova Southeast University, and Southwest Florida College.

TABLE 1: Summary of Programs at Lee County Post-Secondary Educational Institutions
Source: WDG Surveys, Interviews

| | Continuing Education | Employer-Customized Training | Degree Programs | | | Vocational/Technical Programs |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|-------------------------------|
| | | | Associates | Bachelors | Graduate | |
| Barry University | X | X | - | X | X | - |
| Edison College | X | X | X | X | - | X |
| Florida Gulf Coast University | X | X | - | X | X | X |
| Hodges University (formerly International College)* | X | - | X | X | X | - |
| Lee County High Tech Center Central | X | X | - | - | - | X |
| Lee County High Tech Center North | X | X | - | - | - | X |
| Nova Southeastern University | X | - | X | X | X | X |
| Southwest Florida College* | - | - | X | X | - | X |

* Did not respond to survey

Post-secondary educational institutions with the highest number of students are Edison College, Florida Gulf Coast University, Southwest Florida College of Business, and Hodges University (refer to Table 2).

TABLE 2: Graduation and Enrollment at Regional Post-Secondary Educational Institutions
Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS

| Post-Secondary Institutions | City | Total Fall Enrollment (2005) | Total Graduates (2005-2006) |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Barry University * | Ft. Myers | - | - |
| Edison College | Ft. Myers | 10,653 | 1,313 |
| Florida Gulf Coast University | Ft. Myers | 7,249 | 1,212 |
| Hodges University | Ft. Myers | 1,673 | 575 |
| Lee County High Tech Center Central | Ft. Myers | 509 | 232 |
| Lee County High Tech Center North | Cape Coral | 184 | 72 |
| Nova Southeastern University ** | Ft. Myers | - | - |
| Southwest Florida College of Business | Ft. Myers | 1,821 | 832 |
| <i>Total</i> | | <i>22,089</i> | <i>4,236</i> |

* Data is not available for the Ft. Myers campus. Total university-wide enrollment is 8,882, and total graduation is 2,581

**Data is not available for the Ft. Myers campus. Total university-wide enrollment is 25,960 and graduation is 7,013.

WDG last surveyed employers in the fall of 1999. At that time, survey respondents were largely satisfied with the quality of local education and training programs and the quality of graduates from local secondary and post-secondary educational institutions. The results of our most recent survey, however, reveal that now responding employers are less than satisfied with the quality of educational programs and graduates. Additionally, these surveyed employers report that they seldom work with the area's educational institutions for training programs, apprenticeships, co-ops, and other programs. Employers responding to the survey also rarely recruit at area educational institutions.

The basic skills of job applicants since the 1999 survey, as rated by participating employers, also appear to have diminished somewhat in most categories (e.g., team and cooperative skills, verbal communication/comprehension, reading comprehension, math, thinking and judgment/problem solving, and written communication).

Lee County educators, trainers and other agencies have taken positive steps to improve workforce quality and availability since our last report, including the creation of three Comprehensive High Schools focused on vocational and technical training and better communication and program coordination among the colleges and universities. Nevertheless, despite these excellent steps, more action needs to be taken improve the labor recruiting environment. As detailed in this report, these actions include:

1. A continued effort at the high school and middle school levels to present vocational-technical careers as an acceptable and lucrative alternative to college, and existing programs must be broadened to meet the needs of employers. A mechanism is needed to ensure that employers have strong participation in the planning process for programs and curriculum at the new Comprehensive High Schools.
2. Strengthen training programs offered at the Lee County High Tech Center Central and North facilities to more fully meet the needs of area employers. Negative perceptions about the region's technical centers exist and must be overcome.
3. The "disconnect" between the business and educational communities in Lee County that was identified in the 1999 study has not been addressed and remains a critical concern. WDG strongly recommends that an educational consortium exist be immediately established to marshal the existing educational resources in the region to enhance the quality and availability of the workforce to best meet the needs of employers.
4. It is recommended that educational institutions escalate their outreach programs to the not-employed and underemployed residents. Residents surveyed by WDG have expressed a desire for training/retraining, and this enthusiasm should be channeled into skills that serve the needs of existing employers.
5. To bolster the Lee County workforce, a comprehensive program focused on the retiree community should be instituted. Employers must be part of this process, as accommodations will be necessary to meet the needs of retirees.
6. Promote a greater role by the private sector in workforce training. Employers need to recognize that workforce development is no longer the sole responsibility of educators and workforce-development professionals, and that they serve as an integral component in workforce development.

Remedial measures are presented in the last section of this report.

PROFILES OF AREA EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

This section profiles education and training providers and organizations involved in workforce development in Lee County. WDG has established three broad categories for these profiles:

- Public and private post-secondary educational institutions and public school systems
- Community organizations involved in workforce development
- Private training vendors

Organizations are presented alphabetically within each category.

Public and Private Post-Secondary Educational Institutions

1. Barry University

- Barry University is a private Catholic university, which was founded in Miami Shores, Florida (a suburb northeast of Miami). Barry is well known for its business, nursing, health sciences, teacher education, and liberal arts programs. Barry University's main campus is in Miami. Other campuses are located in Orlando and Saint Petersburg.
- Barry University conducts Elementary Education, Pre-K/Primary Education, and Exceptional Student Education 2+2 programs at Edison College in Fort Myers. The 2+2 program enables students who attend the community college for two years to continue to attend Barry classes taught at Edison Community College for the last two years of their studies. These four years (2+2) culminate with a baccalaureate degree from Barry University.

2. Edison College

- Edison College is the largest post-secondary institution in Lee County, and, in 2005, enrolled 10,653 students and conferred approximately 1,313 degrees. Edison College's main campus (Lee Campus) is located in Fort Myers. Other campuses include: Collier Campus in Naples; Charlotte Campus in Punta Gorda; and Hendry/Glades Services in LaBelle. Edison College programs encompass: Associate in Arts degree (AA); Associate of Science degree (AS) in 20 program areas; Certificate Programs in 12 program areas; Continuing Education (C.E.) in 15 program areas; and three college programs for high school students.
- The Associate in Arts degree provides the foundation for continued study at Florida's ten state universities. The program consists of general education requirements and bachelor's degree program prerequisites.
- Edison College baccalaureate programs are offered in three program areas: BAS in Public Safety and Management; BS in Secondary Biology Education; and BS in Secondary Mathematics. The Edison University Center is an alliance between Edison College and regionally accredited colleges and universities offering the opportunity for students to earn bachelor's degrees in 25 program areas.
- Edison College program areas with the highest number of annual graduates include: liberal arts and sciences/liberal studies (647); registered nursing (105); criminal justice/law enforcement administration (25); business administration and management (20); and emergency medical technology/technician (17).

3. Florida Gulf Coast University

- Florida Gulf Coast University is the largest post-secondary institution in Lee County. The university had 7,249 enrollees in 2005, and it graduates approximately 1,212 students annually. Florida Gulf Coast University is part of the Florida State University System, and is responsible for providing programs and services to a five-county region (e.g., Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Glades, and Hendry Counties). The institution opened in August 1997 and conferred its first degrees in May 1998, with 81 graduates.
- The university contains six distinct colleges, including: College of Arts and Sciences; College of Education; College of Health Professions; College of Professional Studies; Lutgert College of Business; and U.A. Whitaker School of Engineering. Presently offered are 47 undergraduate majors and 23 graduate degrees and programs. Non-degree and continuing education programs are also provided.
- The Whitaker School of Engineering offers bioengineering, civil engineering, and environmental engineering degree programs. A new building is presently under construction with funding from the Whitaker Foundation, The Ginn Company, and a state matching grant. Classes began in fall 2005 (in temporary space), and the new facility is expected to open in fall 2008.
- Florida Gulf Coast University provides distance learning and on-line courses with both degree- and non-degree-oriented curriculum.
- The top ten programs with the highest number of bachelor's degrees earners include: liberal arts and sciences/liberal studies (149); elementary teacher education (80); registered nursing (69); criminal justice (62); business administration and management (44); management information systems and business data processing (36); accounting (29); public administration and services (27); finance (22); and medical technology (10).
- The top ten master's degree programs with the highest number of graduates include: business administration and management (48); education administration and supervision (33); registered nursing (18); accounting (16); public administration (14); special education (12); curriculum and instruction (11); counselor education/counseling and guidance services (10); social work (10); and physical therapy (9).

4. Hodges University (formerly International College)

- Hodges University, formerly named International College, offers associate's, bachelor's, and master's degree programs, as well as other non-degree courses of study. Founded in 1990 as International College, the institution's name was changed to Hodges University in June 2007, reflecting the wider diversity of degree programs and the transition from college to university distinction. Hodges University is an independent, not-for-profit institution with campuses located in Fort Myers and Naples, and additional learning sites at Cape Coral and in Charlotte, Manatee, Pasco, and Hernando Counties. On-line courses are also offered.
- In 2005, Hodges University enrolled 1,673 students and conferred approximately 575 degrees. The Fort Myers main campus is the largest, with 1,036 enrollees, followed by the Naples campus with 735 enrollees. Hodges University contains four distinct schools: School of Allied Health; Kenneth Oscar Johnson School of Business; School of Professional Studies; and School of Technology. Offered are 12 associate's degrees, 11 bachelor's degrees, and seven master's degrees.
- Degrees are offered in 17 program areas, including: accounting; applied psychology; business administration; computer information technology; criminal justice; design and drafting; health administration; health information technology; health studies;

information system management; interdisciplinary studies; legal studies; paralegal studies; management; medical assisting; professional studies; and public administration.

- Bachelor's degree program areas with more than ten graduates in 2005 include: business administration, management, and operations (155); multi-disciplinary studies (54); criminal justice/safety studies (29); business administration and management (26); accounting (21); information technology (19); and computer/information tech services administration and management (16). Master's degree programs with more than ten graduates include: business administration, management and operations (40); business administration and management (25); criminal justice/law enforcement administration (12); and computer/information tech services administration and management (11).
5. Lee County School District – Lee County High Tech Center Central & North; and Comprehensive High Schools (secondary vocational-technical programs)
- The Lee County School District is the ninth-largest district in Florida and one of the 50 largest school districts in the U.S. For the 2006/2007 school year, Lee County had the highest increase in student enrollment of any district in Florida. The school district currently educates approximately 82,000 students in grades K-12 and the student population continues to grow. Estimates indicate the student population may reach 140,000 by 2017.
 - The Lee County High Tech Center Central (Ft. Myers) and North (Cape Coral) provide career/technical programs for high school and adult students 16 years of age or older. The facilities provide services for students in a five-county area, including Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, and Glades Counties. The facility, started in 1967, offers over 30 training programs in a variety of subject areas.
 - Among programs offered at High Tech Center Central are academic services, automotive, business education, commercial foods, cosmetology, early childhood education, electronics, health sciences, industrial technology, public services, and vocational prep. Apprenticeship programs are provided in air conditioning, electrical, fire sprinkler, pipefitting, and plumbing.
 - High Tech Center North offers courses in over 25 program areas including: accounting operations; drafting; practical nursing; business supervision and management; commercial arts technology; culinary arts and commercial foods; computer systems technology; digital design; electronic technology; medical coding/billing; medical administrative specialist; network support services and CISCO; nursing assistant; patient care technician; PC support services; surgical technology; web design; and web programming, among others.

- The top ten programs with the highest number of certificate earners at the two campuses combined include: practical nurse (45); surgical/operating room technician (21); cosmetic services (21); business administration and management (18); heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanic and repairer (14); administrative and secretarial services (13); culinary arts and related services (10); accounting (9); electrician (8); and health and medical administrative services (8).
- Three new Comprehensive High Schools recently opened in Lee County. The schools provide secondary students the opportunity to not only select courses from the traditional academic and extracurricular programs, but offers the option of pursuing specialized programs within Technical and Career Education Academies. In addition to being prepared for acceptance at a post-secondary institution, graduates have the opportunity to gain marketable skills and competencies. The three Comprehensive High Schools include:
 - Ida S. Baker High School (Cape Coral): the facility opened in August 2004 and currently serves approximately 2,100 students. The five academies available include: Medical and Biotechnology; Public Service; Business and Technology; Engineering and Manufacturing; and Building and Construction. School choice is required in Florida, and Ida S. Baker High School is the most requested school in the district.
 - South Fort Myers High (Fort Myers): the facility was built in 2005 and accommodates approximately 1,400 students. Academies include: Medical and Biotechnology (sports medicine/physical therapy, veterinary assisting, and biotechnology, and EMS first responder); Public Service (pre-law/criminal justice, pre-education/teacher assisting, fire fighting, and journalism); and Building Construction (drafting).
 - East Lee County High School (Lehigh Acres): the facility opened in August 2005 and currently serves approximately 900 students. Academies presently offered include: Building Construction (CADD, construction engineering, building construction technology/pre-apprentice, environmental); Engineering and Manufacturing Technology (pre-engineering, manufacturing/integrated systems/CAM, computer engineering/robotics, and automotive technology); Business, Finance, Information Technology and Marketing (medical lab/biotechnology, emergency medical services, and health science/physical therapy, sports medicine); Public Service (journalism/television production, pre-education, pre-law/criminal justice, and firefighting); and Tourism and Hospitality (the newest program).
- Students in the district also have the opportunity for dual enrollment at Edison College and Florida Gulf Coast University, enabling high school students to earn both high school and college credits.
- Notably, the Ford Foundation has selected and designated Lee County and the Lee County School District as a Career Academy Innovation Community, one of three selected nationwide. The Ford Foundation will provide funding, technical support, and mentoring assistance to the district to increase the number of students learning in successful career academies. The program also provides ongoing technical assistance and other benefits to help sustain successful career academy networks after they are established

6. Nova Southeastern University

- Nova Southeastern University, based in Fort Lauderdale, has more than 26,000 students and is the largest independent institution of higher education in Florida. NSU awards associate's, bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, doctoral, and first-professional degrees in a wide range of fields. The university is comprised of undergraduate, graduate and professional schools of osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, optometry, allied health and nursing, medical sciences, dental medicine, law, marine biology and oceanography, business and entrepreneurship, computer and information sciences, humanities, conflict resolution, family therapy, interdisciplinary studies, education, psychology and counseling, and family programs.
- The Fort Myers facility offers degree programs leading toward associate's, bachelor's, and graduate degrees, a degree in business administration, teacher certifications, and post-baccalaureate coursework for the PharmD program. Other courses offered include: award certificates of mastery in vocational/technical fields, management and supervisory skills training, continuing education programs, physicians assistant program, allied health programs including nursing and speech language pathology, and non-degree seeking coursework.
- The H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business at Nova Southeastern University offers specialized training for a wide variety of corporate partners in various industries.
- Several of the programs offer internships and clinical apprenticeships as part of the graduation requirements.

7. Southwest Florida College

- Southwest Florida College's campus in Fort Myers enrolled 1,821 students and graduated approximately 832 students in 2005. The institution offers associate's degrees, Bachelor of Science degrees, and general education courses in a variety of program areas.
- Associate's degrees, diplomas, or certificates are offered in the following program areas: accounting technology; computer-aided drafting and design; computer programming and database management; criminal justice; early childhood education; graphic design; hospitality management; interior design and decorating; management and marketing; massage therapy; medical administration; medical assisting; medical billing and coding; network engineering and administration; paralegal studies; surgical technician; technical administration; and web design and development.
- Bachelor of Science degrees include criminal justice, early childhood education, elementary education, interior design and decorating, and management. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data indicates that as of 2006, there were no graduates from these program areas.
- General education courses and cooperative education (formal education along with work experience) are also provided.
- Program areas with the highest number of annual graduates include: graphic design, commercial art and illustration (43); computer and information sciences (40); business administration and management (38); medical records administration (38); medical assistant (31); accounting technician (22); and criminal justice studies (17).

Community Workforce Development Organizations

1. Bonita Springs School, Inc.
 - Based in Bonita Springs, FL
 - Offers a variety of training in the fields of: massage, cosmetology, skin care, permanent makeup, spa therapy, nail technicians, and personal fitness
2. Business and Industry Services Lee County School District
 - Provides quality cost-effective training to meet the needs of Lee County employers
 - Annually provides training for over 3,000 Lee County Employees
 - Classes are available online, on-site (employer) or off-site (Lee County Schools Public Education Center and other community locations)
 - More than 250 courses are available including Accounting Fundamentals, Web Page Design, Health Care, Intro Excel/Word/Power Point and many others.
3. Catholic Hispanic Services
 - Offers volunteer tutoring services.
 - After school tutoring program for elementary school students. Tutoring is by high school students on a one-to-one basis at Ft. Myers Church center or at Bonita Springs Elementary School. Teachers determine need and subject matter.
 - Adult program offers tutoring in English on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Services are provided at homes, offices, and the church.
4. Charlotte Technical Center
 - Offer technical education to high school and adult students
 - Serves over 2,000 high school and adult students annually
 - Accredited by the Council on Occupational Education and is approved by the Veterans State Approval Agency
 - Offers part-time, full-time and distance learning courses in programs such as electronics, drafting, business office technology, and automotive technology.
5. DATS of the Gulf Coast, Inc. at Fort Myers
 - Provides evening classes in dental assistant training
6. ECC/Displaced Homemakers Program
 - Established by the Florida legislature in 1976
 - Program provides employment counseling, job training and education, and job search assistance for people displaced as homemakers
7. FGCU, Small Business Development Center

- Non-profit organization which includes services such as free one-to-one counseling, educational workshops, and support of the activities of the U.S. Small Business Administration
8. Florida Academy of Massage and Skin Care
- Offers training to students to prepare them for careers as licensed massage therapists or registered Florida facial specialists.
9. Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida
- Helps people with disabilities and other barriers to employment through work and career development services
 - Serves the five-county area of: Charlotte, Collier, Desoto, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota Counties
10. Heritage Institute
- Offers Associate and diploma programs in traditional and alternative massage therapy training
 - Nationally accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology
 - Programs offered at the Fort Meyers Campus include esthetics, x-ray medical technician, therapeutic massage, personal trainer and pharmacy technician
11. Key Power Technical Institute
- The institute provides training for truck drivers.
12. Lee County Association for Retarded Citizens (LARC)
- The Association operates sheltered workshops, obtains employment for its clientele and provides training services for businesses.
13. Lee County Department of Human Services
- Serves as a collaborative hub for resources (Federal, State, Local, Private and Non-Profit) designated to aid economically disadvantaged individuals and families
 - Collaborates on projects involving family self-sufficiency, housing services, neighborhood development, and contracts
 - The L.E.E. Program currently offers a free, short-term Medical Office Skills Program that covers medical terminology, career development, customer service, basic billing & coding, computer skills, medical office skills, and assistance with resumes and job placement.
 - Served nearly 30 students in their Medical Office Skills program
14. Literacy Council of Bonita Springs
- Provides services for adults to acquire English skills necessary for reading, writing, speaking and understanding in order to enhance their quality of life
15. Literacy Volunteers of Lee County, FL
- Non-profit organization that provides literacy services to adults with low reading and writing skills and also to ESL adults
 - Tutoring is provided on a free, confidential basis

- Provides customized workplace literacy programs for local businesses
16. Quality of Life Center
- Provides programs that support education, youth enrichment, personal development, community development and social services for at-risk youth and their families
17. Salvation Army - Education Resources
- Program for the homeless. GED and literacy training on-site in Ft. Myers. Job placement services are also provided.
18. Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board
- The administrative entity and fiscal agent for Workforce Development Region 24, comprised of Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee Counties.
 - The mission of the Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board is “to initiate and support effective strategies through collaboration with business, education and social services to facilitate the development of programs and activities that reduce dependency, encourage personal growth and provide economic benefits to individuals, businesses and communities of Southwest Florida.” This is accomplished through several initiatives and programs.
 - Employment and training services are provided to individuals and to businesses through five Career and Service Centers of Southwest Florida located throughout the region.
 - Assessment, recruitment and training services to businesses
 - Labor market information is provided to the business community.
19. Sunstate Academy
- Provides students with training for cosmetologist and manicurist positions
 - Locations in Clearwater and Fort Myers
20. The Training Domain, Inc.
- Offers courses and customized training for business professionals
 - Member of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP)
 - Licensed by the Florida Department of Education and Workforce Florida
21. Tri-County Apprenticeship Academy, Inc.
- Registered Florida apprenticeship program serving the fields of construction and service trade industries
 - Offer apprenticeship training for the following trades: electrical, plumbing, HVAC installation/service, pipefitting, fire sprinkler installation, and voice-data-video.
22. Unity Gain Recording Institute
- Offers two one-year audio recording programs
 - Provide theory and “hands-on” techniques in the area of audio recording

- Graduate placement programs available

23. Vocational Rehabilitation

- An employment resource for businesses and people with disabilities.

24. Dr. Piper Center for Social Services, Inc.

- United Way agency offering three social service programs: Senior Employment Program of Lee County, Foster Grandparent Program of SW Florida, and Senior Companion Program of SW Florida.

Private Vendors

There are approximately 50 temporary/placement agencies in Lee County, and a number of these will provide training, such as Accountemps, Mancan, Robert Half, Kelly Services, Adecco, and Norrell.

STATUS OF PRESENT TRAINING

Employers responding to the WDG survey report that they rarely work with area secondary and post-secondary educational institutions for training programs, apprenticeships, co-ops, or other programs. Local employers use private vendors for training more frequently than they use Hodges University, Southwest Florida College, Barry University, and NOVA Southeastern University. On the other hand, Florida Gulf Coast University, Lee County Technical Centers, area high schools, and Edison College are used by surveyed employers as much or slightly more frequently than private vendors. (Refer to Table 3).

TABLE 3: Training and Educational Resources Used by County Employers
(Frequency of use for training programs, apprenticeships, co-op, or other programs)
 Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007 (Total of 197 Responses)

| Institution | <i>(5=Continuously, 1=Never)</i> | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| | Average Rating | Median Rating |
| Florida Gulf Coast University | 1.8 | 1.0 |
| Lee County Technical Centers | 1.6 | 1.0 |
| Area high schools | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Edison College | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Private vendors (e.g. training and development consultants) | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Hodges University (formerly International College) | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| Southwest Florida College | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| Barry University | 1.1 | 1.0 |
| Nova Southeastern University | 1.1 | 1.0 |

While responding employers report that they rarely work with the area's educational institutions for training programs, they also rarely recruit current students or graduates for job opportunities. Florida Gulf Coast University, Lee County Technical Centers, and Edison College are utilized more than others, but as seen in Table 4, these institutions are seldom approached for recruiting purposes.

TABLE 4: Training and Educational Resources Used by County Employers for Recruiting
(Frequency of use for recruiting purposes)
 Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007 (Total of 197 Responses)

| Institution | <i>(5=Continuously, 1=Never)</i> | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| | Average Rating | Median Rating |
| Florida Gulf Coast University | 1.9 | 1.0 |
| Lee County Technical Centers | 1.8 | 1.0 |
| Edison College | 1.8 | 1.0 |
| Area high schools | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Southwest Florida College | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Hodges University (formerly International College) | 1.4 | 1.0 |
| Private vendors (e.g. training and development consultants) | 1.4 | 1.0 |
| Barry University | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| Nova Southeastern University | 1.2 | 1.0 |

EFFECTIVENESS OF PRESENT TRAINING

Survey respondents rate the basic skills of job applicants as less than satisfactory and indicate the need to increase the basic skill levels of the workforce. Team and cooperative skills are rated as nearly satisfactory; however, the overall basic skills of all applicants, verbal communication/comprehension, reading comprehension, math, thinking and judgment/problem solving, and written communication are rated as less than satisfactory. (Refer to Table 5).

TABLE 5: Employer Ratings of Basic Skills
Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007

| | <i>(5=Excellent, 1=Poor)</i> | |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Average Rating | Median Rating |
| Team and cooperative skills | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| Overall basic skills of all applicants | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Verbal communication/comprehension | 2.6 | 3.0 |
| Reading comprehension | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| Math | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| Thinking and judgment/problem-solving | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| Written communication | 2.3 | 2.0 |

Employers responding to the WDG survey report that the fundamental computer skills of applicants for office positions personnel are satisfactory, though they fall short of the skill level that employers need (needed skill-3.7, skill seen-3.3). Observed skills also did not meet expectations for basic keyboard skills, using word processing software, using spreadsheet software, and using database software. Notably, the observed skill levels of professional and technical candidates with specialized computer skills exceeded the skill levels needed for Cisco, Linux, Novell, Oracle, and UNIX program languages. Seen skill levels of applicants did not meet needed skills in Microsoft and for the overall training or learning capacity of applicants (Refer to Table 6).

TABLE 6: Employer Ratings of Computer Skills in the Workforce
Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007

| Computer Skill | Needed Skills | | Currently-Seen Skills | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>(1=No Need; 5=Strong Need)</i> | | <i>(1=Poor; 5=Excellent)</i> | |
| | Average Score | Median Score | Average Score | Median Score |
| Office Personnel (Non-Managerial) | | | | |
| Fundamental skills | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 3.0 |
| Basic keyboard skills | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 |
| Using word processing software | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 3.0 |
| Using spreadsheet software | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| Using database software | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Accessing and using Internet | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 4.0 |

TABLE 6 (continued): Employer Ratings of Computer Skills in the Workforce
 Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007

| Computer Skill | Needed Skills | | Currently-Seen Skills | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| | <i>(1=No Need; 5=Strong Need)</i> | | <i>(1=Poor; 5=Excellent)</i> | |
| | Average Score | Median Score | Average Score | Median Score |
| Professionals/Technicians | | | | |
| Cisco | 2.6 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 3.0 |
| Linux | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.0 |
| Microsoft | 4.1 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.0 |
| Novell | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.0 |
| Oracle | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.0 |
| UNIX | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 2.0 |
| Overall training or learning capacity of applicants | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.4 | 3.0 |
| Manufacturing Personnel | | | | |
| Basic keyboard skills | 2.7 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 3.0 |
| Distribution Personnel | | | | |
| Basic keyboard skills | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.0 |

Responding employers with knowledge of graduates from and programs at the area's educational institutions report unsatisfactory quality ratings of the graduates and programs. Florida Gulf Coast University receives the highest rating of the area institutions listed, though the rating is less than satisfactory (see Table 7).

TABLE 7: Quality of Graduates and Programs From Local Educational Institutions
 Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007

| Institution | <i>(5 = Excellent, 1 = Poor)</i> | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| | Average Rating | Median Rating |
| Florida Gulf Coast University | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Edison College | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| Lee County Technical Centers | 2.4 | 3.0 |
| Area high schools | 2.3 | 2.0 |
| Hodges University (formerly International College) | 2.0 | 1.0 |
| Private vendors (e.g. training and development consultants) | 2.0 | 1.0 |
| Southwest Florida College | 1.9 | 1.0 |
| Barry University | 1.7 | 1.0 |
| NOVA SE University | 1.6 | 1.0 |

Employers report that the region's high schools need to bolster programs in work ethic, communication/speaking, job interview skills, job preparedness, critical thinking, life skills, reading/writing, and computer/software skills. Refer to Table 8 for a listing of the necessary training and educational program improvements, along with a list of other/specialty skills required by surveyed employers.

TABLE 8: IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED AMONG LOCAL TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007 (1=Poor; 5=Excellent)

| Program/skill | High schools | 2-year colleges | Universities/ 4-year colleges |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| No opinion | 44 | 44 | 45 |
| None | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Basic skills | 65 | 19 | 8 |
| Communication/speaking | 86 | 43 | 31 |
| Computer/software | 40 | 33 | 21 |
| Critical thinking | 58 | 45 | 36 |
| Job Interview skills | 70 | 50 | 34 |
| Job Preparedness | 72 | 43 | 32 |
| Life Skills | 76 | 33 | 25 |
| Math | 70 | 28 | 12 |
| Reading/writing | 82 | 29 | 18 |
| Vocational training | 45 | 21 | 6 |
| Work ethic | 98 | 53 | 44 |
| Other/specialty skills (See Below)* | 7 | 5 | 8 |

| * Other/Specialty Skills Needed | |
|---|--|
| High school | Four-year Educational Institutions |
| Banking, bill management | Second language |
| English language | Banking, bill management |
| Need more subcontractor classes; plumbing, electric, HVAC, so kids can get into career in lieu of college | English language |
| Trades/construction: manufacturing, engineering tech, etc. | Foreign Language (Spanish) |
| CAD | Problem solving (troubleshooting) skills |
| Construction skills | Retail Management |
| Hands-on carpentry | Trades - Kids can make a great life in Trades. |
| | Trades/construction: manufacturing, engineering tech, etc. |

| Two-year Educational Institutions |
|--|
| Second language |
| Banking, bill management |
| English language |
| Trades/construction: manufacturing, engineering tech, etc. |
| Foreign Language |

Among the 177 employers responding to whether they have training needs that are not met locally, 34 employers (19.2%) identified deficiencies. Specific training needs not locally met are detailed in Table 9.

TABLE 9: Training Needs Not Available Locally
Source: WDG Employer Survey, Summer/Fall 2007

| | |
|--|--|
| Aircraft mechanic specialty training | Hospital-based coding |
| Artists | Human resources management |
| Bank Secrecy Act | Industrial electrical |
| Bank-specific items | Insurance sales training |
| CNC machine programming (2 listings) | LEED-certified professional courses |
| CNC machining | Machine operation |
| Computer programming and tech skills must be certified by manufacturer. No manufacturers in this area. | MBA Programs |
| Computer skills related to micro-electronics in equipment | Media buying/planning |
| Continuing education for techs, office person | Medical lab technician/supervisor |
| Crew and project leadership | Sign business – nothing available within sign fabrication |
| Customer service – basic skills | On-the-job training to install hurricane protection & window installation |
| Diesel mechanics | OSHA training / Safety at work (2 listings) |
| Electrical estimating | Outside sales |
| Embroidery design | Pharmacy |
| Engineering (2 listings) | Press operations |
| Engineering – specific aspects of civil engineering | Public relations |
| Engineering – advanced graduate level | Retail Management - Undergraduate Level |
| Engineering – advanced CAD training for engineering | Sign business - fabrication |
| Engineering – undergraduate and graduate programs for all fields | Skilled workers in concrete and masonry - we do our own training |
| Engineering technicians | There is/was a legal secretary program at Tech Center, but have never been able to hire anyone because of their lack of skills |
| Engineering/technology for office | Trade skills: carpentry, drywall, plaster |
| English classes for non-English-speaking employees | Ultrasound |
| FAA aviation technician | We have in-house training programs to meet every need. |
| Heavy equipment operators (2 listings) | Woodworking machining skills for custom work |
| High-skilled carpentry for shop | Work standards |

Comments from the surveys and employer interviews on labor quality and needed program improvements include:

1. Local high schools:

- “High schools need to convince kids it’s OK to not go to college IF they can have vocational school training. Perhaps a career-track in trades (plumbing, electric, etc.) to show they can earn \$25,000-\$75,000/year.”
- “High schools should provide more career-guided options, i.e., vocational – CAD, computers, administrative, medical.”

2. Post-secondary Educational Institutions

- “Institution’s resources are not sufficient to train or educate all interested students in subject[s] [nursing, K-12 teachers, CAD technicians, medical lab]. Quality, attrition (students not prepared).”
- “Would like to see FGCU and other local universities work toward partnerships with local organizations to keep education job-seekers in the area.”
- “Employment needs are primarily computer/technical programming. We generally recruit out of the SW Florida area due to lack of available personnel with these skills in the area.”
- “I just need a pool of a professional/technical class. Need honest programmers (Edison is the only program that comes at all close). Need sales.”

3. Other Programs

- "Lee County has a shortage of adequately trained workers for the construction industry. Even in this severe downturn we are experiencing the people that are out there have very little usable knowledge of local codes. The journeyman program offered is terrible and the people they accept is laughable. Also the language barrier is a big issue."
- “The construction industry hires unskilled labor and trains them. Most cannot read or write. There are very few trade school opportunities in Lee County. 50% of Lee County’s workforce is tied to construction.”
- “We need more nursing programs available in Lee County. Problem lies with long waiting lists, not enough room for incoming students.”
- “Consistency in providing continued funding for training. More surveys need to be done for Lee County area to show the greater need for training dollars. There is a significant population increase by Hispanics. Tallahassee must be aware that our area is in need of more training dollars.”

TRAINING/RETRAINING INTEREST AMONG NOT-EMPLOYED AND EMPLOYED RESIDENTS

Among the not-employed residents surveyed in August 2007, 82.3% report an interest in receiving training to acquire new job skills. Training programs of interest to not-employed workers are identified in Table 10. Of the not-employed workers interested in training/retraining programs, 63.6% would be willing to pay for this training on their own time.

TABLE 10: Interest in Retraining: Residents Currently Not Employed (*Multiple Responses*)
Source: YA Residential Survey, August 2007

| Position | Interest in job retraining | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | % | <i>Extrapolated population</i> |
| Any/Open | 18.20% | 13,967 |
| Medical Related (except nursing) | 13.60% | 10,475 |
| Computer – General | 11.40% | 8,730 |
| Business | 5.70% | 4,365 |
| Nursing | 5.70% | 4,365 |
| Computer – Specialized | 4.50% | 3,492 |
| Financial Services | 4.50% | 3,492 |
| Management | 4.50% | 3,492 |
| Construction | 3.40% | 2,619 |
| Education Related | 3.40% | 2,619 |
| Manufacturing – Skilled | 3.40% | 2,619 |
| Office/Clerical | 3.40% | 2,619 |
| Sales | 3.40% | 2,619 |
| Agricultural | 2.30% | 1,746 |
| Auto Mechanic/Auto Body | 2.30% | 1,746 |
| Customer Service | 2.30% | 1,746 |
| Leisure/Entertainment | 2.30% | 1,746 |
| Cosmetology | 1.10% | 873 |
| Food Preparation and Services | 1.10% | 873 |
| Transportation/Truck Driving | 1.10% | 873 |
| Social Services | 1.10% | 873 |
| All Other | 1.10% | 873 |

Of the employed workers surveyed in August 2007, 45.5% report an interest in receiving training to acquire new job skills. The types of training employed workers would like to receive are identified in Table 11. Of those workers expressing an interest in retraining, 59.5% would be willing to pay for this training on their own time.

TABLE 11: Interest in Retraining: Residents Currently Employed (Multiple Responses)
 Source: YA Residential Survey, August 2007

| Position | Interest in job retraining | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| | % | Extrapolated population |
| Computer – General | 10.60% | 12,710 |
| Business | 9.70% | 11,694 |
| Medical Related (except nursing) | 9.70% | 11,694 |
| Any/Open | 9.30% | 11,185 |
| Education Related | 7.20% | 8,643 |
| Nursing | 5.50% | 6,609 |
| Management | 5.10% | 6,101 |
| Auto Mechanic/Auto Body | 4.20% | 5,084 |
| Leisure/Entertainment | 4.20% | 5,084 |
| Financial Services | 3.80% | 4,576 |
| Office/Clerical | 3.80% | 4,576 |
| Computer – Specialized | 3.00% | 3,559 |
| Protective Services | 3.00% | 3,559 |
| Food Preparation and Services | 2.50% | 3,050 |
| Manufacturing – Skilled | 2.50% | 3,050 |
| Sales | 2.50% | 3,050 |
| Electronics/Electrical | 2.10% | 2,542 |
| Transportation/Truck Driving | 2.10% | 2,542 |
| Special Trade | 1.70% | 2,034 |
| Agriculture | 1.30% | 1,525 |
| Construction | 1.30% | 1,525 |
| Customer Service | 1.30% | 1,525 |
| Childcare | 0.80% | 1,017 |
| Real Estate | 0.80% | 1,017 |
| Cosmetology | 0.40% | 508 |
| Government Services/Military | 0.40% | 508 |
| Social Services | 0.40% | 508 |
| All Other | 0.40% | 508 |

CONCLUSIONS AND REMEDIAL MEASURES

Several key issues are brought to the foreground resulting from our interviews with employers, educators, trainers, and government officials in the area, and our survey of workforce training providers and post-secondary educational institutions. These issues are presented below, along with suggested remedial measures. Some of these recommendations are also presented in the *Labor Market Assessment of Lee County, Florida*, submitted under separate cover.

1. **Continued effort is necessary at the high school and middle school levels to present vocational/technical careers as an acceptable and lucrative alternative to college, and existing programs must be broadened to meet the needs of employers.** Since 2004, three new Comprehensive High Schools have been opened in Lee County, and they are distributed throughout the region. The high schools include Ida S. Baker High School (Cape Coral), South Fort Myers High (Fort Myers), and East Lee County High School (Lehigh Acres). These schools offer the option of pursuing specialized programs in vocational and technical fields along with traditional academic programs.
 - High school guidance counselors should be as knowledgeable about vocational/technical training opportunities and careers as they are about college-prepared careers and opportunities. Extended programs to have guidance counselors and high school teachers tour operations and shadow the workers at Lee County employers' sites are urged. It is also recommended that career days at area middle schools and high schools include former students who are now working for Lee County firms.
 - Employers rarely use the area high schools for training programs, apprenticeships, co-ops, and other programs. Notably, interviewed employers continue to suggest that more emphasis be placed on vocational and technical training in the region. The message about the current and future programs offered at the Comprehensive High Schools must reach area employers.
 - Programs at the three Comprehensive High Schools are relatively new, and they continue to evolve. A mechanism is needed to ensure that employers strongly participate in the planning process for programs and curriculum at the new Comprehensive High Schools.
2. **Training programs offered at the Lee County High Tech Center Central and North facilities need to be strengthened to more fully meet the needs of area employers.** The two facilities provide services for high school and adult students age 16 years of age or older in a five-county area. A wide variety of vocational and technical programs are currently offered. Area employers responding to the WDG survey rate the quality of educational programs and graduates at the areas technical centers as less than satisfactory. Notably, employers surveyed in 1999 had a higher opinion of the quality of programs and graduates at the area's technical centers, reporting an average rating above satisfactory.
 - Employers rarely use the area's technical centers for training programs, apprenticeships, co-ops, and other programs, and they also seldom recruit workers from these centers. As indicated above, employers suggest that more emphasis be placed on vocational and technical training in the region.

- The WDG survey is unable to determine whether employers do not utilize training programs, apprenticeships, co-ops, and other training programs because of their negative perception about the quality of technical centers, or because they are unaware of the diversity of programs available at the local institutions. Nevertheless, the negative perceptions about the High Tech Centers must be overcome through program improvement combined with regular and frequent outreach to ensure that the needs of employers are met. E-mailed newsletters to area employers on updates may be helpful in this regard. Solicitations for feedback could also be helpful to assess program successes.
3. **WDG’s Training Providers Assessment prepared in 1999 indicates a “disconnect” between the business and educational communities in Lee County – and this disconnect remains.** Employers responding to the August 2007 survey have relatively low opinions regarding the quality of area secondary and post-secondary institutions and graduates; they rarely utilize the institutions for training, internships and co-op programs; and they seldom recruit graduates from these institutions. These negative perceptions must be reversed. *A consortium of educators and employers is recommended* to marshal existing educational resources in the region to enhance the quality and supply of talent needed to meet the staffing needs of Lee County employers. This consortium can be an outgrowth of the current college and university coordination and communication programs and presidents’ council.
- Stronger educator/employer linkages should be developed to all secondary and post-secondary institutions to enhance the use of Lee County’s educational resources by employers for worker training and recruiting, to alert employers to the full breadth of educational resources available in the region, and to provide the educators with information on the training needs of area employers. A neutral third party should be assigned that will bring employers and educators together, facilitate honest and open dialogue, and serve as a catalyst for change.
 - The designated lead agency is encouraged to work closely with area employers to develop co-op and internship programs in a variety of fields with Lee County High Tech Center-Central, Edison College, Southwest Florida College, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Hodges University. Such programs can enhance recruitment of students by employers upon graduation, and build an experienced “fresh-out” workforce. The designated lead agency can help employers by providing program coordination at universities, making contacts, searching out best practices, and coordinating low- or moderate-cost housing for summer interns from outside the region (such as the dormitories of local colleges and universities).
 - Surveyed employers indicate that over the next 12 months there will be large demand for the following occupations: call center agents/representatives (379), registered nurses (292), elementary school teachers (203), secondary school teachers (203), customer service representatives (171), licensed practical nurses (154), clerical workers with advanced computer skills (149), and computer support specialists/technicians (199), among other occupations. There are currently tight labor recruiting conditions for health care, clerical, computer support, sales, experienced management, electrical and electronic repair, and building and construction workers. Training providers must be made aware of the ongoing needs of employers and work closely with them to develop strategies to meet these recruiting concerns.

- Recommended issues for the consortium to address might include:
 - Career-training strategies for employees, and why they are important.
 - Improved recruiting techniques of graduates from area educational institutions.
 - The need for educational institutions to better prepare students for the workplace.
 - The role of co-op, internship, and apprenticeship programs in workforce training.
 - Identification of educational services and employer needs and how to synchronize those needs through effective training/retraining.
 - How to better communicate between area educators and employers.
 - Openly discuss the role of each of the county's vocational/technical training providers to prevent unnecessary service and resource duplication.
 - Gain consensus on what kinds of vocational-technical programs are needed, and develop career pathways between vocational/technical schools, community colleges, and four-year degree programs.
 - The need to re-brand vocational/technical programs for a greater appeal to residents in the 18-25 year age range.
 - How to attract more students into vocational/technical fields by providing facilities that are as attractive and up-to-date as college facilities, with modern equipment and capable, enthusiastic instructors.
 - Explore the role of the region's colleges. Is the role of the institution to train students in academic programs or in programs needed by local employers?
 - Examine the role of the region's institutions in advising employers to become managers of people.
 - The need for a dedicated outreach individual(s) from the schools to serve as the point(s)-of-contact with area industry. The point(s)-of-contact would regularly or frequently visit or call on area employers to see where training programs can be offered or developed.

4. **It is recommended that area educational institutions escalate their outreach programs to the not-employed and underemployed residents.** There is a strong pool of employed and not-employed residents with a desire for training/retraining. Educational institutions are encouraged to offer courses and programs that match the types of training desired by residents, as well as those that match the current needs of employers.

- Recruiting programs can be instituted for certain segments of the employed and not-employed populations. Employed residents would likely need to take courses in the evenings or on weekends. Among the not-employed population would be physically challenged individuals, retirees, and residents with transportation and childcare/eldercare issues. Programs could be geared to occupations that lend themselves to job sharing and flexible scheduling. Financial assistance programs could also be sought to help offset training costs for qualified individuals.

- Educational institutions, along with other workforce agencies, are urged to provide job counseling to the retired and to Baby Boomers nearing retirement who want to continue working, and to the not-employed who may wish to re-enter the workforce. These individuals could use a variety of training programs, including career-changing opportunities and challenges; available educational resources for training and skills enhancement; skills testing; career counseling; and résumé writing. Such workforce programs could be offered by the Southwest Florida Workforce Investment Board at various venues across the region to maximize access and availability.
5. **A comprehensive program focused on the retiree community should be instituted to bolster the Lee County labor force.** To attract the large numbers of mature county residents that are not working now but would like to work, and to retain currently employed mature workers in the workplace, special employer accommodations will have to be considered that meet the needs of these people, such as flexible working hours, part-time work, and—for the currently employed—phased retirement programs.
- Program ideas have been advanced by several AARP studies, including *Staying Ahead of the Curve 2004: Employer Best Practices for Mature Workers*, and *The Business Case for Workers Age 50+: Planning for Tomorrow's Talent Needs in Today's Competitive Environment*. Both of these publications are available on AARP's website (www.aarp.org).
 - According to the household survey, these residents are well educated and possess skills needed to fill some of the current workforce gaps. We also urge the Horizon Council to investigate some of the best practices across the country for keeping and attracting residents over the age of 50 in the workforce. One example is the *Arizona Mature Worker Initiative*. The contact for initiative and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices can be found at www.wadley-donovan.com/workforce.
6. **Promote a greater role by the private sector in workforce training.** Because conditions are changing, employers need to recognize that workforce development is no longer the sole responsibility of educators and workforce-development professionals. Employers must now be part of the process.
- Examples in which employers can participate include: formalized programs in mentoring (by trained employees); job shadowing with educators, principals, and guidance counselors; and one-on-one mentoring between employees and students on personal development, job skills, and life skills (similar to Big Brother and Sister programs). A broader use of the Junior Achievement Program or concept is urged within the educational system.