



PALM BEACH COUNTY WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

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Executive Summary

Underwritten by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workforce is often billed as the new incentive as companies consider opportunities for new investment and job creation. The quality and availability of a regional workforce is generally the leading consideration as businesses evaluate both their existing locations and any potential new locations.

In today's environment of near historic low unemployment rates, the challenges of finding skilled talent have become even greater. The current unemployment rate at 3.6 percent in Palm Beach County is not the only factor impacting workforce availability. The aging and impending retirement of baby boomers, technology enhancements requiring new skills, and a sometimes negative perception of middle-skill job opportunities all affect the talent pipeline.

WORKFORCE & SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS

As Palm Beach County continues to aggressively recruit businesses to the area, the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County (BDB) recognizes the importance of offering existing and future employers a strong pipeline of talent to ensure their success in the county. The BDB engaged Boyette Strategic Advisors (Boyette) to conduct a workforce and skills gap analysis of the regional workforce. This analysis, which was funded through a grant from JPMorgan Chase & Co., identified the regional labor market area; assessed workforce availability; identified skills gaps related to 10 targeted sectors; explored commuting patterns and other potential barriers to employment; and developed data to use in marketing the Palm Beach County labor market.

Business Development Board Targeted Sectors

Advanced Manufacturing
Aerospace/Aviation/Engineering
Agribusiness
Business/Financial
Corporate Headquarters
Distribution/Logistics
Equestrian
Healthcare
Information/Telecommunications
Life Sciences

In addition to a general workforce analysis related to the BDB targeted sectors, Boyette also took a deep dive into middle-skill occupations and demand related to three of those sectors: Aviation/Aerospace/Engineering, Information Technology/Telecommunications, and Healthcare. Middle-skill occupations were defined as those that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree.

KEY FINDINGS

A comprehensive workforce analysis requires extensive examination of data, combined with stakeholder input to fully assess the challenges and opportunities of a regional workforce. This analysis results in determination of skills gaps, as well as availability issues, which should be addressed through pursuit of strategic initiatives to enhance the workforce.

Key findings from this research in Palm Beach County include the following:

- An overall shortage of middle-skill talent exists in the Aviation/Aerospace/Engineering, Information Technology/Telecommunications, and Healthcare sectors.
- Educational programs do not always align with occupational demand related to the Palm Beach County targeted sectors.
- Employers are generally satisfied with the quality of the Palm Beach County workforce, but have identified a need for improvement in soft skills.
- The workforce is rapidly aging out in the Advanced Manufacturing, Aviation/Aerospace/Engineering, Agribusiness, and Distribution/Logistics sectors.
- The cost of living, particularly housing cost, in Palm Beach County is negatively impacting workforce recruitment and retention.
- While the School District of Palm Beach County offers an extensive selection of career tech programs, recruitment of students to middle-skill career opportunities is still very challenging.

More detailed findings from this analysis are presented below.

- The Palm Beach County labor market area includes Broward, Martin, and St. Lucie Counties, in addition to Palm Beach County. The region has a population of 3.9 million, with a labor force of 1.97 million. The labor participation rate is 60.8 percent.
- More than 50 percent of the workforce in the Manufacturing, Aviation/Aerospace/Engineering, Agribusiness, Distribution/Logistics, and Healthcare sectors are over 45 years of age.
- Middle-skill occupations represent 43.36 percent of employment in the labor market area, with 39,000 additional middle-skill jobs expected to be created in the next five years.
- Palm Beach County has a seasoned workforce, with almost half of its residents working in their current field for 15 years or more.
- Many stakeholders suggested that information technology instruction should be embedded across the curriculum as demand for these skills continues to grow.
- Some millennial residents, who are Palm Beach County natives, indicated that they did not have adequate career counseling in high school to fully understand and explore the various career pathways available to them.
- Employers in several sectors have difficulty finding middle-skill talent due to the need for more effective marketing of middle-skill career opportunities and pathways.
- Less than one percent of high school students surveyed are considering a career in manufacturing, with almost 20 percent planning on a healthcare career.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic recommendations were developed in five categories: Pipeline, Policy, Business, Connections and Communications. These recommendations, which are designed to enhance Palm Beach County’s workforce assets, include accompanying action steps. Following are the recommendations:

- Enhance Post-Secondary Offerings for Target Sectors
- Address Soft Skills Challenges at the High School & Post-Secondary Levels
- Address Specific Skills Gaps with Additional Secondary & Post-Secondary Programs

PIPELINE



- Explore Opportunities for Businesses to Collaborate with Education & Training Providers
- Enhance Work + Learn Opportunities for Students & Teachers

BUSINESS



- Create Programs & Events Focused on Target Sector Training
- Create Opportunities for Engagement to Enhance Workforce Quality & Availability
- Maximize the Available Workforce by Addressing Barriers to Work

CONNECTIONS



- Develop Articulation Agreements Between Institutions
- Enhance Collaboration Across Educational institutions & With Employers
- Invest in Education/Training Programs Tied to Talent Demand
- Address Policy Issues Impacting Workforce Development & Availability

POLICY



- Utilize Effective Communications Tools to Promote the Palm Beach County Workforce
- Enhance Perception of Workforce Assets & Opportunities

COMMUNICATIONS

