

CareerSource Okaloosa Walton EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM QUARTERLY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Report quarter: April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025

Date of meeting: June 12, 2025

Report prepared by: Michele Burns

Local workforce development board contact: Michele Burns **Date:** June 12, 2025

B. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organization	Industry or Education Organization	Contact Information
Donna Daniels	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	Education	Danied15@erau.edu
Nicole McDonald	University of West Florida	Education	nmcdonald@uwf.edu
Jesse Spaid	Emerald Coast Technical College	Education	Jesse.spaid@walton.k12.fl.us
Glenn Boschen	Micro Systems, Inc.	Industry	Glenn.boschen@kratosdefense.com
Bonnie Barlow	Bridgeway Center	Industry	bonnie.barlow@bridgeway.org
*Lionell Poston	Walton County Economic Development Alliance	Economic Development	lionell@wcedafl.com
Cole Randall	One Okaloosa	Economic Development	cole@oeokaloosa.org

Name	Organization	Industry or Education	Contact Information
*Alivia Howle	Walton County Board of County Commissioners	Industry	alivia.howle@mywaltonfl.gov
*Laura Campbell	Applied Technology Academy	Education	Campbell.l@appliedtecha.com
Chasity Fry	Live-Oak	Industry	Chasity.fry@liveoakfiber.com
Caralee Gibson	GSC Systems	Industry	c.gibson-15@gscsystems.net
*Cathy Starkey	GSC Systems	Industry	cathy.starkey@gscsystems.net
*Samantha Spain	Walton County Board of County Commissioners	Education	samantha.spain@mywaltonfl.gov
*Jimmy Heckman	Florida Commerce	Presenter	James.Heckman@commerce.fl.gov
Staff:			
Kelly Jordan	CSOW	Workforce	kjordan@carersourceow.com
Brad Balfanz	CSOW	Workforce	bbalfanz@careersourceow.com
Emmy Epperson	CSOW	Workforce	eepperson@careersourceow.com

B. SUMMARY REPORT

I. Call to Order

- Meeting was called to order by the Chair, Glenn Boschen.

II. Welcome and Introductions

- Attendees introduced themselves and welcomed new members and guests.

III. Labor Market Information and Industry Trends

Presented by: Jimmy Heckman, Bureau Chief, Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, FloridaCommerce

- Regional unemployment (April 2025): 3.3% (up from 2.6% in April 2024).
- Labor force growth: 1.4% in Okaloosa-Walton (compared to 0.6% statewide).
- Top employment sectors: Leisure & Hospitality, Professional & Business Services, Retail Trade, Healthcare.
- Job trends: Growth in health services and local government; decline in professional/business services.
- AI and workforce implications discussed, including challenges in tracking automation's impact on job loss.
- Key insight: More job postings than unemployed individuals in the region.

IV. CareerSource Okaloosa Walton Training Update

Presented by: Brad Balfanz, CareerSource Okaloosa Walton

- 71 participants in training; 150 active at any time.
- Over \$320,000 invested in scholarships.
- Programs driven by in-demand occupations and participant choice.
- Multiple funding sources: WIOA, CDL sector grants, Rural Initiative, and Get There Faster.
- Average wage increases in healthcare and CDL occupations noted.
- Upcoming RN crossover program at Emerald Coast Technical College (ECTC).

V. Talent Needs

Presented by: Industry Representatives

- Key challenges:
 - Shortage of experienced technical talent (manufacturing, electronics, and machining).
 - Communication, professionalism, and presentation skills lacking in new graduates.
 - AI and automation are evolving needs, especially in transportation and defense sectors.
 - Small businesses need support with onboarding, training manuals, and orientation planning.

VI. Educational Programs to Meet Business Needs

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University – Donna Daniels

- Offers a variety of degree programs aligned with labor market needs (engineering, project management, data science, aviation).
- Strong support for veterans and transitioning military members.

Emerald Coast Technical College - Jesse Spaid

- Preparing for reaccreditation in October.
- Hiring LPN instructors and expanding nursing programs.

Applied Technology Academy– Laura Campbell

- Launching an AI & Machine Learning pilot course (Aug 11–15).
- Course is based on a declassified DoD program; limited to 25 participants.

VII. Roundtable Updates

- Walton County Economic Development Alliance rebranded to Wonderful Walton.
- Interest in targeting workforce strategies for the upcoming Williams facility.
- CareerSource Okaloosa Walton shared details about the upcoming Hiring Our Heroes event at Eglin AFB (July 15).
- Walton County BCC shares they are facing challenges filling senior management positions due to retirements.

VIII. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned.
- Next Meeting Date: To be determined.