



Quarterly Report

Business & Education Council Meeting

August 11, 2026
12:00 pm via Zoom

Employers in Attendance:

Kara Palmer-Smith (Early Learning Coalition), Jujuana Howard (Leon County Clerk of Court), Kim Anders (Prime), Trish Andrews (GDLS), Luis Ramirez (Capital Health Plan), Stephanie Thomas (Big Bend Cares), Dana Dudley (BBMC/Pittman Law), Tanyisha Thomas (Big Bend Transit),

Education Providers in Attendance:

Matt Robeson (Leon County K-12), Dr. Michelle Gayle (Leon County K-12)

Members Absent:

Paula Deboles-Johnson (Leon County Government), Katie Harwood (Tallahassee Chamber), Richard Myhre (Wakulla County Schools), Shyam Mistry (Keiser University), Willie Jackson (Gadsden Technical College), Jackie Pons (Jefferson County Schools), Elijah Key (Gadsden County Schools), Steve Capenos (FSU HR), Shawn Woodin (Southern Scholarship Foundation), Cindy Bruton (Brynwood Health and Rehab), Selina Barden (Family Promise of the Big Bend), BJ Van Camp (Lively Technical College), Phyllis Watson (FAMU), Dr. Calandra Stringer (TSC), Regina Browning (Leon County ACE), Adriene Wright (Abelita LLC/SBDC), Nicole Kessler (Kessler Construction)

Others in Attendance:

None

Unfilled Vacancies: None

Staff: Trish Yahn, Britny Bacon, Katrina Johnson, Keantha Moore

I. Welcome & Call to Order – Trish Yahn, staff liaison

Meeting called to order at 12:02 p.m.

II. Labor Market Information/Priority Sectors (all Apprenticeship focused) – Trish Yahn

- National market statistics including participation rates, earnings and top industries
- Florida and local area labor landscape include fund availability, employer ROI, key education partners, and active industry sectors
- Overview of Sectors of Strategic Focus Apprenticeship Expansion Special Grant

III. Apprenticeship Overview and Opportunities in the Capital Region – Katrina Johnson, Apprenticeship Navigator Specialist

IV. Educator/Employer Introductions and Discussion

Employers:

- **Jujuana Howard** Has not considered apprenticeships previously but is now interested. Faces high turnover in entry-level positions requiring 1-2 years of training. Believes apprenticeships with increased rates could improve retention during the training period. Will take the idea to her executive team and contact Apprenticeship Navigator Specialist.
- **Dana Dudley** Considering internships and new hires for ESP Media. Requested additional LMI, Britny Bacon will connect to provide the information.
- **Luis Ramirez:** Trying to get internship program before an apprenticeship going. Will schedule meeting with Apprenticeship Navigator Specialist at a later date.
- **Tanyisha Thomas** Low turnover for admin positions ("staff literally stay forever"). Interested in exploring an apprenticeship for an assistant position that has been promised but unfilled for three years.
- **Stephanie Thomas** Currently building training and SOPs due to a new CEO. Interested in registered apprenticeships and will contact Apprenticeship Navigator Specialist.
- **Kara Palmer-Smith** Has explored apprenticeships and spoken with Katrina, aware other early learning coalitions use them. Not a current priority due to workload; current focus is on training middle management to support front-line staff.
- **Kim Anders** Electronics manufacturing industry. Strong interest in apprenticeships for both new hires and incumbent workers, noting their increasing relevance for technical skills training. Expressed interest in group training (two new hires, two incumbent workers) to foster a network, similar to a successful intern program. Current training needs include continued support for supervisors (LEAD program), building a course on deploying learned skills ("what to say when"), and training in clear, empathetic communication using case studies. Asked to schedule meeting with Apprenticeship Navigator Specialist.

Education

- **Matt Robeson** Wants to expand work-based learning experiences for K12 CTE programs. Interested in developing a "pre-apprenticeship program" for high school students to connect those with industry certifications to local businesses for apprenticeships or work-based learning and has been working with Apprenticeship Navigator Specialist. Lively Technical College successfully places HVAC students into apprenticeship programs. Leon County government has a junior apprenticeship program. Identified potential areas for connection: culinary, building trades, digital design.

- **Michelle Gayle** "Parent to teacher" program (one closing at Florida A&M University). Aiming for 10 "grow your own teachers" (paraprofessionals taking classes at Florida A&M). ◦ Similar program with Tallahassee State College for paraprofessionals to become certified ESE teachers.

VI. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m. by Trish Yahn. Next meeting will be via Zoom on November 17, 2026 12:00-1:00 pm