

DEVELOPING A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE FOR THE SUNCOAST: EIGHT KEY CHALLENGES.

This study has explored the territory that the Suncoast must traverse in the early 21st century. It is for the people of the area to build the road to the destinations they desire to reach. What follows is a list of eight key challenges for building the Suncoast road to the 21st century and a workforce to fit it.

1. **Improve the educational performance of Suncoast K-12 students.** Put special emphasis on teamwork and customer service skills as well as basic cognitive skills.
2. **Enhance the quality of career and guidance counseling** especially within the area's high schools but also in One Stop Career Centers. Ensure that top quality career and guidance counseling is available and accessible to all students and residents of the Suncoast area.
3. **Reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates in Suncoast high schools.** Undertake a broad and focused business and community-wide efforts to achieve these goals.
4. **Align education, training, and career preparation with Suncoast's major economic clusters.** Focus education, training, and career preparation in the Suncoast's major economic clusters in hospitality, high technology niche manufacturing, healthcare, creatives, and entrepreneurship.
5. **Increase and improve direct interaction between educators and the business community.** Foster active mentoring, internships, advisory committees, job shadowing, brain gain programs, career awareness programs, and easy access to up-to-date career resources.
6. **Promote and support Suncoast entrepreneurship.** Develop and enhance centers that provide counseling, technical assistance, and training to nurture the startups and other businesses that are already in the area.
7. **Draw pre-retirement professional Baby Boomers to the Suncoast area.** Let them employ their talents, pursue their business interests and enjoy the diverse natural and cultural amenities in both counties.
8. **Brand the Suncoast as a place where creative professionals of all ages are valued and supported.** Make the Suncoast an even more attractive place to live and work for the types of human talent needed by the area's economy and its businesses.