


# **Suncoast Workforce Board, Inc.**

21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce  
Study Update  
March 2006



# Challenge 1 – Improve the educational performance of Suncoast K-12 students

1. Build relationships by having educator's participate at the First Jobs/First Wages Council meetings, and to work towards developing teacher internships including stipends for after school participation.
  - First/First has School Board members and school administrators from both counties.
  - Representation from MCC and the Suncoast Education Alliance (SEA).
  - High school junior provides input.
2. Include teachers' union and collective bargaining units in SWB planning implementation meetings.
  - Teacher's union representative now serves on the Board.

# Challenge 1 – Improve the educational performance of Suncoast K-12 students

3. Involve businesses in pre-school education efforts and educate business people on the importance and the return on investment of pre-school and even pre-natal efforts.
  - Early learning coalitions in both counties now have business people on their Boards.
4. Make “workplace skills” a percentage of students’ grades in both counties. Make these skills clear to teachers and infuse curricula with them.
  - Workplace skills are 20% of a students grades in Sarasota, and teachers in Manatee incorporate workplace skills into their courses, in particular, the career and technical education courses. .

## Challenge 2 – Enhance the quality of career and guidance counseling

1. Place a Career Advisor in each high school
  - Career Advisor's are at Venice, Booker, Phoenix Academy, Sarasota, Riverview and Northport high school.
  - Manatee hopes to have them in place for the 2006-07 school year.
2. Designate high school and middle school adult representatives to attend SWB Council meetings.
  - School representatives have been invited to present on truancy, GED Exit Option and Career Counseling. Representatives take back planning initiatives of the Council.

## Challenge 2 – Enhance the quality of career and guidance counseling

3. Use Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test in high schools in both districts. The ASVAB Career Exploration Program enables students to learn more about themselves and the world of work so that they can make informed career decisions.
  - Sarasota & Manatee high schools offers the ASVAB assessment free of charge to juniors and seniors. Students can use the information as they continue their career planning which begins in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Riverview was chosen by the Department of Defense to have their students filmed for a training DVD to go to high school teachers, counselors and ASVAB trainers across the United States.

## Challenge 2 – Enhance the quality of career and guidance counseling

4. Recommend career exploration be part of middle school and elementary school curriculum.
  - SWB supported Junior Achievement programs in the elementary and middle schools in both counties, i.e., Entrepreneurial based education – “Our Region” examines how business operates in Manatee, and Personal Economics, Success Skills, Economics of Staying in School and Our World/Economics in Sarasota.
  - The Suncoast Education Alliance and the Suncoast Workforce Board are sponsoring a calendar contest “Picture Your Career” for sixth graders in both school districts.

## Challenge 3 – Reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates in Suncoast high schools.

1. Implement the GED exit option through guidance departments and administration.
  - GED Exit Option has been implemented in the school districts in both counties. The program provides an alternative graduation option for students at risk of not graduating.
2. Hold a series of community conversations involving a partnership with SWB, Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse (SCOSA), Manatee Chamber Business Against Narcotics & Drugs (BAND) and the two public school systems on an aggressive drug policy resulting in all students being drug-free.
  - Leaders from local business, government, and schools came together in October to discuss the substance abuse issue as a contributing factor to the dropout issue. Ideas from this initial gathering include, but are not limited too:

## Challenge 3 – Reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates in Suncoast high schools

- √ Engage students and parents in addressing this issue
- √ Consider drug-free workplace programs or insurance incentives to prevent drug and alcohol use
- √ Show the impact of substance abuse financially, on the whole community

## Challenge 3 – Reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates in Suncoast high schools

- √ Voluntary drug testing for athletes and students in other extra curricular activities is being explored.
- √ Conversations have taken place with school superintendents in both districts.
- √ A best practices model in Texas using ID discount cards is being researched. A similar pilot program could be developed for the Suncoast starting with one school in each county.

## Challenge 4 – Align Education, training and career preparation with Suncoast’s major economic clusters

1. Develop a regional website that includes a database of career options available in Manatee/Sarasota area linked to the educational or training requirements for each. The website will show a seamless education system with exit points from entry level to top management.
  - The Suncoast Education Alliance and Ringling School of Art & Design is compiling training information from Suncoast schools including post-secondary to produce the website.
  - A USF intern will meet and survey employers in industry clusters, (Healthcare, Financial Services, Food Processing, Tourism, Employment & Technical Services, Real Estate, Construction and Manufacturing) who are currently participating in the Career Pathways project.

## **Challenge 5 –Increase and improve direct interaction between educators and the business community.**

1. Develop a “Career Hallway” in Suncoast middle and high schools. Local businesses would participate and would be asked to share financial resources. A professional media firm would be contracted with to develop artistic wall pictures and posters to highlight the various careers available in their company. The hallway would include education requirement and earnings potential.
- Suncoast Workforce Board received an \$8,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to apply toward the recommendation.
  - The grant was used to purchase touch screen flat monitors that are connected to computers displaying and highlighting career opportunities in demand occupations in Manatee and Sarasota counties. The “Career Pathways” presentation is presently displayed in Manatee and Sarasota middle and high schools, and the three One Stop centers in Sarasota, Bradenton and Venice.

## **Challenge 5 –Increase and improve direct interaction between educators and the business community.**

- The mission is to educate students about career paths in their community, and motivate them to stay here following graduation. The presentation lists career paths, educational requirements and earnings potential available in each career.
- Students were surveyed to determine the impact and effectiveness of the initial project. Comments included: “I was not aware these types of jobs were around here”, “thought I would have to move some place else to make this kind of money” and “I never heard of most of these companies”. Approximately 1,000 students have viewed the project.
- The goal of exposing the region’s students and their parents to local career opportunities is being met.

## **Challenge 5 –Increase and improve direct interaction between educators and the business community.**

2. Implement a “Take Your Teacher to Work Day” program that would give teachers a one-day shadow experience in a selected career clusters.
  - Manatee & Sarasota school boards have identified the instructors who will participate in the program.
  - The first year is planned as a pilot with three teachers from elementary, three from middle and three from high schools participating. Business, industry and teachers have been receptive to the idea and look to having a strong program for next year.
  - A meeting will be scheduled in May 2006 to review the results.

## Challenge 6 - Promote and support Suncoast entrepreneurship.

1. Develop and enhance regional resources that provide counseling, technical assistance, and training to nurture the startups and existing entrepreneurs in the Suncoast expand and grow.
  - A Manatee & Sarasota Entrepreneur Resource Website was developed and launched on December 1, 2005.
  - The website includes a step-by-step online start-up model and a regional contact resource directory.

## Challenge 6 - Promote and support Suncoast entrepreneurship

- The site is accessed through various venues, including the Tampa Bay Partnership website, the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County, the Manatee Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Council and the Suncoast Workforce Board.
- A marketing brochure is being developed that will be distributed to resource organizations and training providers.
- A committee of the local resource organizations and training providers will come together to further help promote Suncoast entrepreneurship and to keep the information current.

## Challenge 7 – Attract and retain young professionals as well as pre-retirement Baby Boomer professionals to the Suncoast.

1. Monitor and support the cooperative effort of the counties to address workforce housing, and highlight workforce information and implications. Rally forces to create a more amenable environment to attract and retain workers by going before policy makers with concerns about affordable housing.
  - Recommendations based on three focus points to:
    - 1) monitor and support the cooperative efforts of the counties to address workforce housing
    - 2) rally young professionals as a political force for affordable housing and
    - 3) research motivation of the younger demographic groups.

## Challenge 7 – Attract and retain young professionals as well as pre-retirement Baby Boomer professionals to the Suncoast.

1. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to eliminate the need for rezoning to residential uses where higher densities are established in the local government's land use plan.
2. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to follow the Manatee County or the developed City of Sarasota model for an incentive-based approach for the provision of affordable/workforce housing including fee reimbursement and expedited permitting.
3. To address housing that is affordable for pre-retirement baby boomers and young professionals where not currently present, encourage Suncoast area local governments to include high density multifamily zoning districts (18-50 units per acre or more) in zoning codes with reasonable parking, storm water, buffer, and other lot, yard and bulk regulations including less restrictive height regulations where more open space is an acceptable trade-off.
4. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to facilitate parking underneath buildings by not counting additional height caused by parking garages.
5. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to establish *minimum* single-family and multifamily densities especially in proximity to commercial and industrial areas served by mass transit.
6. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to expedite permitting processes, such as in Manatee County, for qualified affordable/workforce housing development.
7. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to evaluate median housing costs and median family incomes quarterly and make adjustments to zoning and other government regulations and fees as needed to reduce median family housing costs.
8. Encourage Suncoast area local governments to update their respective land use plan, housing plan and zoning at least annually based on new populations projections, median housing costs, and the housing situation of young professionals.
9. To address housing that is affordable for pre-retirement baby boomers and young professionals, encourage Suncoast area local governments to evaluate median housing costs and median family incomes quarterly. Also, make adjustments to zoning and other government regulations and fees as needed to reduce median family housing costs.
10. Encourage Manatee and Sarasota County governments to appoint a young professional representative from each County to the Suncoast Workforce Board and to other advisory boards.

## Challenge 7 – Attract and retain young professionals as well as pre-retirement Baby Boomer professionals to the Suncoast.

2. Support the AARP Symposium to educate employers about older workers by involving Sarasota Human Resource Association, senior groups and employers, and form an advisory group to create a meeting place for workers to connect to projects.
  - Meetings were held with local employers to discuss the progression of this initiative.
  - Small luncheon/workshops will be held to “educate” our local employers on how to prepare for the “changing workforce”.
  - Flex time, part time and project work will have to be considered to utilize the talents of the baby boomers.

## Challenge 8 – Brand the Suncoast as a place where creative professionals of all ages are valued and supported.

1. 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.
  - Conduct a “Creative's Program” similar to the successful Manatee Project Teach program in the 7th grade in both counties.
  - The pilot program would be conducted in magnet schools or small learning environments. Creative's will promote endeavors in (arts, culture, music, science, engineering, technology, management and entrepreneurs) as career paths. Creative professionals would participate in a training workshop and then spend time in the classroom informing students about their careers and the steps taken to get there
  - Develop a contest for students at local colleges to create a branding logo and marketing campaign to brand the Suncoast as a place where creative professionals can work and live.