

Executive Summary

WorkForce One-Broward commissioned a study in late 2007 with the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES) at Florida Atlantic University, who partnered with the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, the Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach County, Inc., and the Marine Council of Miami-Dade County, to develop a workforce needs assessment of the marine industries in the Tri-County area of Southeast Florida. This area encompasses Broward, Palm Beach, and Miami-Dade counties, a region that has a dominant marine industry. The survey was mailed out in February of 2008, and analysis was completed in May of 2008.

The overall objectives of this study were:

- to determine the labor needs of the Southeast Florida marine industry
- to determine which skills will be needed now and in the future
- to identify factors affecting change in the marine industry
- to determine what formal training and training preferences are needed, and
- to provide a base for future studies and actions for the marine industry.

A total of 816 of 997 sent surveys were successfully delivered to marine businesses in the Tri-County area, with a response rate of 29 percent (233 respondents). The survey attempted to gauge the present workforce needs of the marine industry, as well as those in the near future. Also, a major focus of the survey was to determine the level of need and interest in local educational centers that focus on marine trades and to provide guidance for developing those programs. The survey found a considerable amount of interest in the development of a local training center located at Broward Community College. This interest in a local training program specializing in technician

training in South Florida holds great promise for the Marine Technology Program at Broward Community College.

Key Findings

Respondent Profile

- Almost half (45%) of small-medium businesses (5+ employees) have been in operation for 20 or more years. Of the sole proprietors (under 5 employees), 40 percent have been in business for less than 10 years.
- The majority of respondents were small-medium companies. There were 55 percent (127) small-medium companies and 45 percent (106) sole proprietors, totaling 233 total respondent businesses. This compares with a sample population split between small-medium (44%) and sole proprietors (56%).
- The largest proportion of businesses surveyed were involved with some aspect of repair or service, followed by sales.
- The majority of employees in the Tri-County marine industry work full time.

Positions Needed

- About half (53%) of those employees that marine businesses are currently recruiting are trades and technical positions, particularly electrical technicians, boating systems technicians, carpenters/joiners, and boat yard laborers. Sales staff are also in demand. Two-thirds of the future positions that marine companies are looking to hire are trade and technical positions, followed by sales staff.
- The most important skills that the marine industry needs currently and in the future are technical skills, which consist of mechanics, welders, engineers, and electricians. Next highest needs are experienced employees, followed by workers with solid personal attributes, such as work ethic, honesty, and loyalty.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of those companies with five or more employees have difficulty finding qualified personnel. Only half (53%) of sole proprietors mentioned difficulty in recruiting personnel.

Future Changes

- Over four-fifths (86%) of those surveyed feel that the industry will change in the future, but over two-thirds do not see those changes affecting skill needs.
- Leading the list of changes in the industry are economic factors, e.g., the cost of fuel, operations, and the economic slowdown. Technological advancements are the second biggest factor.

Training

- Over a third (28%) of respondents prefer training or certification for electrical, sales and boat systems technicians.
- While nearly three-fifths (59%) of the respondents feel that there is a need for local training centers, 73 percent of respondents do not send employees for outside training. Also, 45 percent provide formal on-the-job training, while only 21 percent have apprenticeships.
- The biggest reason for not sending employees for further training is an excessive workload, followed by expense.
- The main reason sole proprietors do not send employees for further training is the expense, while small-medium companies report excessive workload as a barrier to training.
- Most respondents found that hands-on training, both on- and off-site, was the most useful type of training, as well as workshops.
- Nearly half (45%) of the total sample was interested in learning more about the Broward Community College Marine Technology Program.
- The overwhelming majority of the total population does not offer career pathways. Of the 17 percent who do offer career pathways, 28 percent are sole proprietors and 72 percent are small-medium companies.
- Only about one-fifth (17%) of the total sample was aware of the Employ Florida Marketplace website.

Subcontractors

- Over half (54 percent) of respondents use subcontractors. Over a third (36%) of those companies use subcontractors to complement gaps in employee expertise.