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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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SWFL TECH REPORT 2025:

Building the Gulf Coast Tech Corridor

A collaborative report produced by SWFL Tech in partnership with FGCU RERI, Lee County Economic Development Office, and CareerSource Southwest Florida.

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1. Executive Summary

Southwest Florida is rapidly emerging as one of Florida’s most promising new tech hubs — a region where early momentum, rising talent, and cross-sector innovation are beginning to converge into a recognizable ecosystem. With strong anchors in med-tech, digital services, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and data-enabled industries, the region is beginning to exhibit the early markers of a growing technology economy. The 2025 SWFL Tech Pulse report brings these signals together for the first time through a unified, collaborative snapshot of the region’s workforce, talent pipeline, employers, and emerging innovation activity.

Produced in partnership by SWFL Tech, FGCU’s Regional Economic Research Institute (RERI), CareerSource Southwest Florida, and the Lee County Economic Development Office (EDO), this report provides a data-informed view of where Southwest Florida stands today and where the region is headed next. It highlights the people, institutions, and organizations that are shaping the Gulf Coast Tech Corridor from Sarasota to Marco Island — a corridor increasingly connected through education alignment, workforce mobility, and shared economic opportunity.

Why It Matters

Technology jobs fuel higher wages, expand economic resilience, and diversify the region’s historical dependence on hospitality, construction, and healthcare. According to RERI analysis, core tech industries in Southwest Florida have grown **37.8% since 2019**, and average tech wages now exceed **\$122,000**, nearly double the regional average. Employer demand continues to grow across roles such as software development, cybersecurity, data analytics, systems administration, and technical support — reinforcing that technology is no longer a niche sector, but a broad-based driver of competitiveness.

At the same time, the region faces challenges common to emerging tech hubs: a relatively small but rapidly growing talent base, modest graduate retention, early-stage startup activity, and a need for deeper connectivity across education, workforce, and industry stakeholders. These challenges represent opportunities - opportunities to shape the next decade of the region’s economic identity.

A Collaborative Lens

This report reflects a shared commitment to understanding and advancing the region’s technology landscape. Each partner contributed data, analysis, and on-the-ground insight to build a comprehensive picture of Southwest Florida’s momentum.

What This Report Provides

This report provides a data-informed view of Southwest Florida’s technology ecosystem, including workforce trends, talent pipeline insights, emerging skills, industry competitiveness, ecosystem contributors, and forward-looking regional opportunities. It is intended to inform workforce strategy, education alignment, employer investment, and regional collaboration over the next several years.

A Region on the Rise

The data in this report signals that while Southwest Florida’s tech sector remains early in its development, it is unmistakably on an upward trajectory. Emerging clusters are forming. Talent is growing. Collaboration is strengthening. And community organizations across the region — from K-12 and higher education to startups, employers, investors, and ecosystem builders — are actively contributing to a shared vision for the Gulf Coast Tech Corridor.

Insight

“The strength of Southwest Florida’s tech ecosystem comes from the people and organizations who choose to build it together. This report reflects a shared commitment to grow opportunity, expand talent, and shape a regional future we can all be proud of.”

Laura Schmidt, President & Board Chair, SWFL Tech

2. Defining the Tech Sector & Ecosystem

Southwest Florida's tech sector is defined by organizations that create, deliver, or enable technology-driven products and services — spanning software development, IT services, data analytics, cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure, digital health, advanced manufacturing, and med-tech. But the broader *tech ecosystem* includes far more: the educators, startups, employers, investors, nonprofits, and community groups that collectively shape innovation, talent development, and economic opportunity.

This report uses a regional ecosystem lens to reflect both the **direct tech economy** and the **tech-enabled industries** that drive Southwest Florida's competitiveness. It captures the partners who build talent, the firms that create jobs, the networks that accelerate collaboration, and the emerging geographic patterns of innovation across the region.

The Gulf Coast Tech Corridor

The Gulf Coast Tech Corridor includes the five counties that anchor Southwest Florida's economic and workforce region — **Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades** — while naturally extending northward into **Sarasota, Manatee, and DeSoto**, where regional talent, entrepreneurship, supply chains, and partnerships increasingly intersect.

This corridor is defined not by jurisdictional boundaries but by **shared workforce mobility, industry connectivity, and educational alignment**, forming a coastal arc of innovation that complements and strengthens the broader Tampa Bay ecosystem.

County-Level Snapshot

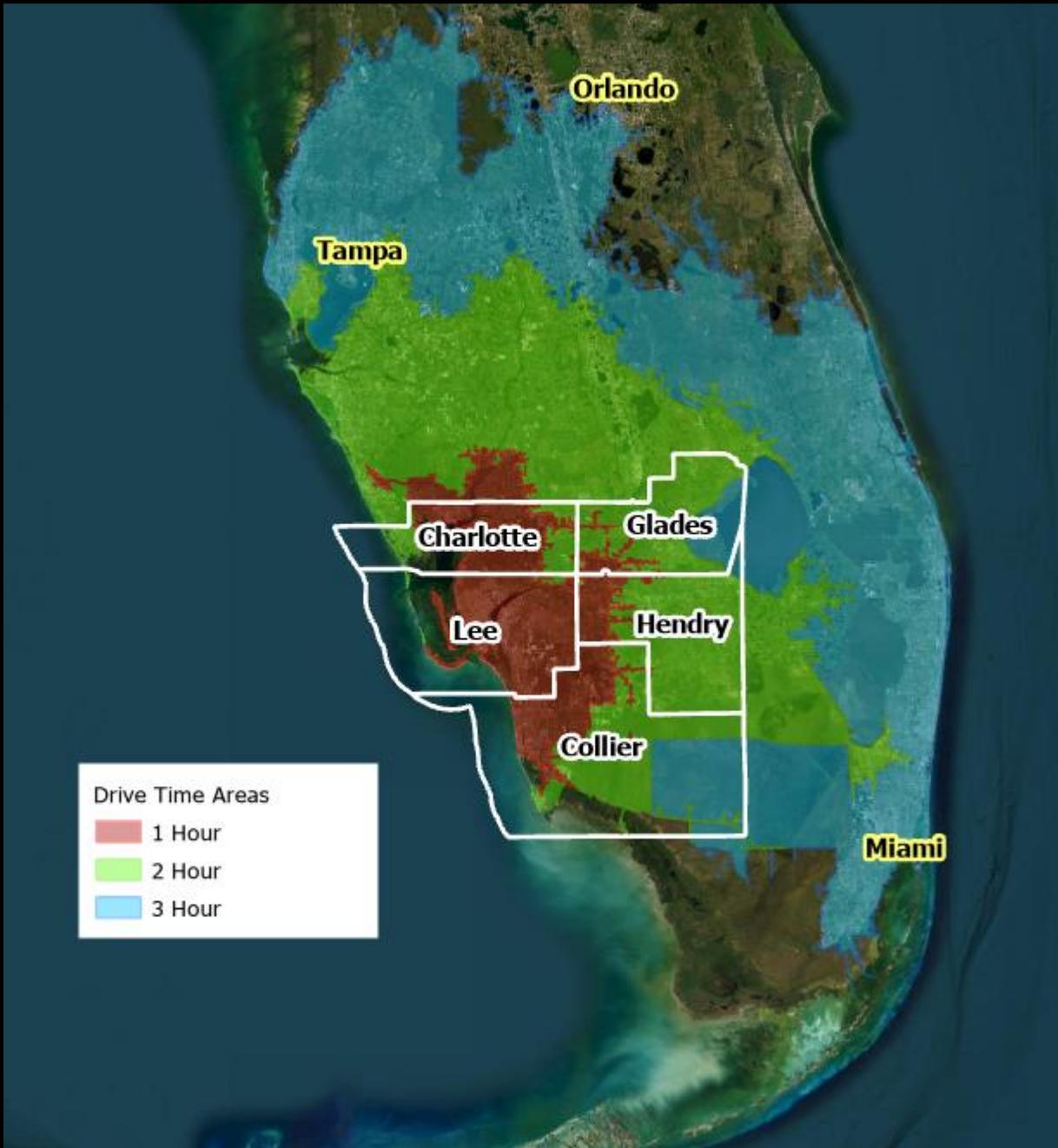
- **Lee County (Fort Myers / Cape Coral)** – Emerging innovation with life sciences and medical manufacturing as well as multiple cybersecurity and digital services firms.
- **Collier County (Naples)** – High-growth hub of med-tech, capital networks, and digital health, supported by headquarters operations, venture activity, and expanding tech-enabled services.
- **Charlotte County (Port Charlotte / Punta Gorda)** – A growing advanced manufacturing and aerospace corridor with strong connections to supply chain, and logistics.
- **Hendry & Glades Counties** – Regions of emerging opportunity focused on agri-tech, broadband expansion, and rural workforce connectivity — strengthening the pipeline into regional tech roles and digital careers.

Ecosystem Composition

Southwest Florida's tech ecosystem includes:

- **Core tech employers** (software, IT services, cybersecurity, data firms)
- **Med-tech, biotech, and advanced manufacturing anchors**
- **K–12 academies, workforce programs, and higher-ed institutions**
- **Startups, early-stage innovators, and digital-first companies**
- **Investors and capital networks**
- **Community organizations and meetups**
- **Nonprofits, workforce boards, and economic development partners**

This multi-sector network is the foundation of an emerging tech hub — one that is beginning to coordinate more intentionally around shared opportunity.



Insight

“SWFL’s Technology Ecosystem is nascent and closely connected with the region’s roots including healthcare agriculture and hospitality technology. While several elements for a healthy ecosystem are becoming available in the region, we still need connections across education, workforce, business, and funding networks to converge.”

Amir B. Ferreira Neto, RERI

3. Tech Workforce Overview

Southwest Florida’s tech workforce is expanding steadily, driven by employer demand across healthcare, med-tech, logistics, education, advanced manufacturing, and professional services. While the region’s tech talent base remains smaller than major Florida metros, it is experiencing **rapid acceleration** — a defining characteristic of emerging tech hubs.

According to **FGCU RERI analysis of Lightcast data (2024)**, Southwest Florida employs **8,543** workers in Computer and Mathematical Occupations and **17,212** in Core Tech Industries. Between 2019 and 2024, employment in these industries grew **37.8%**, significantly outpacing overall regional job growth.

Top Occupations Driving Regional Growth

Occupation Name	Employment	Percent of Total Employment
Software Developers	2,024	23.7%
Computer User Support Specialists	1,836	21.5%
Computer Systems Analysts	898	10.5%
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	674	7.9%
Computer Occupations, All Other	527	6.2%
Information Security Analysts	385	4.5%
Operations Research Analysts	262	3.1%
Data Scientists	260	3.0%
Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	255	3.0%
Computer Network Architects	237	2.8%
Computer Network Support Specialists	227	2.7%
Web Developers	191	2.2%
Web and Digital Interface Designers	181	2.1%
Computer Programmers	164	1.9%
Database Administrators	154	1.8%
Computer and Information Research Scientists	76	0.9%
Database Architects	73	0.9%
Statisticians	42	0.5%
Mathematicians	27	0.3%
Actuaries	26	0.3%
Mathematical Science Occupations, All Other	25	0.3%
Total Employment	8,543	100.0%

Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast

RERI’s occupational analysis highlights a workforce concentrated in roles that support both tech-first and tech-enabled industries:

- **Software Developers** – 2,024
- **Computer User Support Specialists** – 1,836
- **Computer Systems Analysts** – 898
- **Network & Computer Systems Administrators** – 674
- **Computer Occupations, All Other** – 527

- Information Security Analysts – 385
- Data Scientists – 260
- Operations Research Analysts – 262

These occupations represent a healthy balance of entry-level, mid-level, and advanced technical roles — an important indicator of a growing tech economy.

Industry Concentration

Table 2. Southwest Florida Core Tech Industry Employment, 2024

Industry Name	Employment	Percent of Total Employment
Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	9,959	57.9%
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	3,766	21.9%
Software Publishers	676	3.9%
Computing Infrastructure Providers, Data Processing, Web Hosting, and Related Services	480	2.8%
Ship and Boat Building	427	2.5%
Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing	424	2.5%
Navigational, Measuring, Electromedical, and Control Instruments Manufacturing	378	2.2%
Aerospace Product and Parts Manufacturing	375	2.2%
Other Electrical Equipment and Component Manufacturing	188	1.1%
Electrical Equipment Manufacturing	162	0.9%
Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing	108	0.6%
Motor Vehicle Body and Trailer Manufacturing	81	0.5%
Electric Lighting Equipment Manufacturing	56	0.3%
Audio and Video Equipment Manufacturing	33	0.2%
Railroad Rolling Stock Manufacturing	27	0.2%
Manufacturing and Reproducing Magnetic and Optical Media	22	0.1%
Computer and Peripheral Equipment Manufacturing	21	0.1%
Motor Vehicle Manufacturing	11	0.1%
Communications Equipment Manufacturing	8	0.0%
Other Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	8	0.0%
Household Appliance Manufacturing	2	0.0%
Total Employment	17,212	100.0%

Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast

Core tech employment is anchored in several key industries, reflecting both direct tech activity and tech-enabled professional services. According to **RERI analysis of Lightcast data (2024)**:

- Management, Scientific & Technical Consulting Services – 9,959 jobs
- Computer Systems Design & Related Services – 3,766 jobs
- Software Publishing – 676 jobs
- Computing Infrastructure & Hosting Services – 480 jobs

These sectors support technology needs across healthcare, manufacturing, finance, public sector, and regional business operations.

Workforce & Employment – Southwest Florida (2024)

Computer & Mathematical Occupations

CoreTech

Growth in Tech Workforce

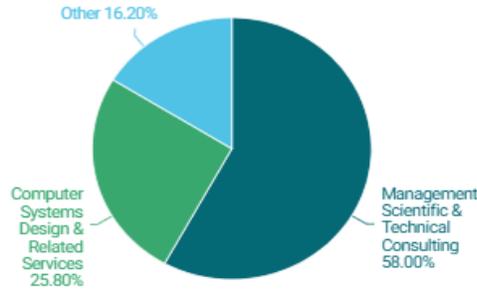
8,543
Employment (2024)

17,212

37.8%

Industry Segments (2024)

Management consulting is the largest segment at 58%.



Summary Metrics

Metric	Value
Tech establishments	3,618
Tech workforce growth 2019–2024	37.8%
Avg earnings, Core Tech Industries	\$122,629
Region average wage	\$61,476

Strongest occupational concentrations:

- Software Developers
- Computer User Support Specialists
- Network and Systems Administrators
- Information Security Analysts
- Data Scientists

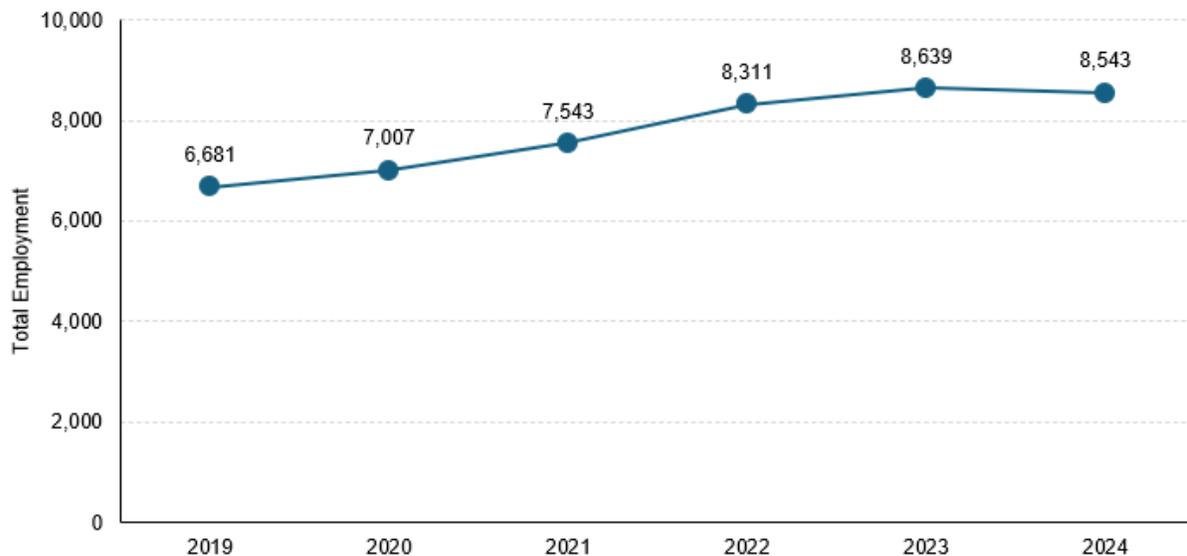
Core Industries & Business Landscape

3,618 tech-related establishments (2024). Largest segments: Management, Scientific & Technical Consulting (58%); Computer Systems Design & Related Services (25.8%). Notable cross-sector tech intensity in medical labs, education & training, and life sciences.

Employment Trends and Wages

Employment and Wage Trends

Chart 1. Southwest Florida Computer and Mathematical Occupations Employment, 2019 to 2024



Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from [Lightcast](#)

Tech roles offer a clear economic advantage for Southwest Florida residents and employers:

- **\$122,629** – Average earnings in Core Tech Industries
- **\$61,476** – Average wage across all industries

According to **RERI analysis of Lightcast earnings data, 2024**, the wage differential reinforces the region’s opportunity to expand high-value job pathways.

Workforce Trends

Between 2019 and 2024, Southwest Florida experienced:

- **Sustained year-over-year growth** in Computer & Mathematical Occupations
- **Increasing earnings across most tech roles**
- **Expansion of tech-enabled roles in healthcare and education sectors**
- **Growth in cybersecurity and cloud-aligned job postings**

These indicators reflect the early trajectory of an emerging hub — one where foundational tech employment is expanding and clustering around anchor institutions.

Insights

“Consistent demand across levels—from entry to advanced—demonstrates healthy tiered job growth and training potential.”

Bill Welch, CareerSource SWFL

“SWFL’s Technology industry is incipient and growing. From 2019 to 2024, tech employment in Southwest Florida grew by 37.8% while tech occupations represented approximately 3.5% of the total regional employment. SWFL Core Tech average earnings (\$122,629) are about 2x as higher as the average wage in SWFL across its different industries (\$61,476).”

Amir B. Ferreira Neto, RERI

4. Education & Talent Pipeline

Southwest Florida’s education and talent pipeline is growing, but not yet at the pace required to meet regional employer demand. The region produces a wide range of technology-aligned credentials each year — from networking and cybersecurity to software development and data analytics — yet only a portion of those graduates fill local openings. Strengthening the pipeline and improving retention will be essential to sustaining momentum as an emerging tech hub. According to **FGCU RERI analysis of Lightcast data (2025)**, **7,996** individuals completed technology-aligned programs in Southwest Florida. Of those, **2,100** remained in the region for employment — a **26.3% graduate retention rate**.

Talent Pipeline & Retention

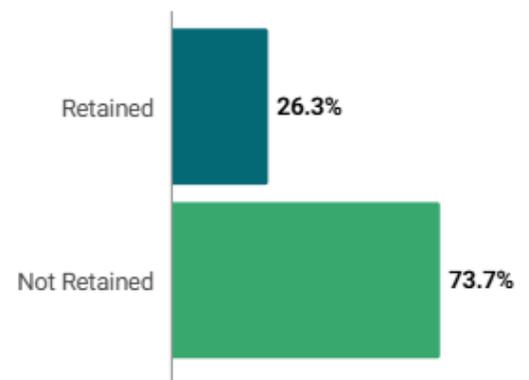
Pipeline overview (2025)

7,996 individuals completed tech-aligned programs in Southwest Florida (2025). 2,100 remained in the region — a 26.3% graduate retention rate.

From graduates to local hires



Graduate retention rate



Occupational retention highlights

Highest retention in:

- Computer User Support Specialists
- Web Developers
- Network and Systems Administrators

Lowest retention in research-oriented and advanced computation fields — an opportunity for local employer engagement and career-path development.

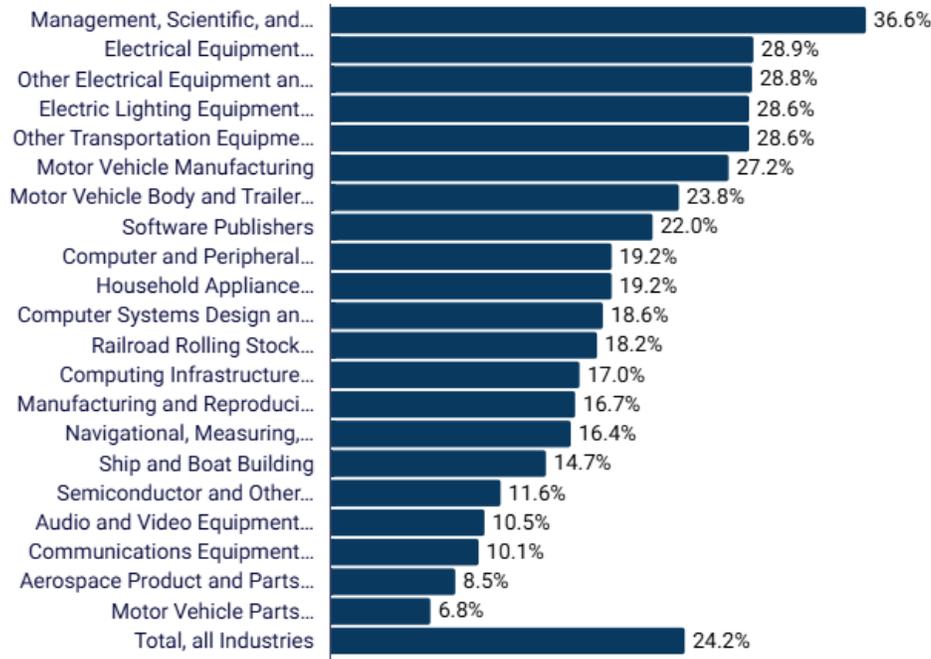
Insight

Several major developments are unfolding across Southwest Florida and our adjacent counties that will reshape the region’s economic landscape. These emerging assets—spanning Lee, Collier, Charlotte, and into Sarasota and Manatee—will anchor the next chapter of the Gulf Coast economy. Projects such as the Mote marine campus at UTC, the continued growth of planned communities such as Lakewood Ranch, Babcock Ranch and now Kingston, the expansion of Paradise Sports Complex and the success of the Great Wolf Lodge, the rebuild of the Cape Coral Yacht Club and the continued growth of FGCU and FSW and finally the new concourse and terminal expansion at RSW are all part of a new SWFL.”

John Talmage, Lee County EDO

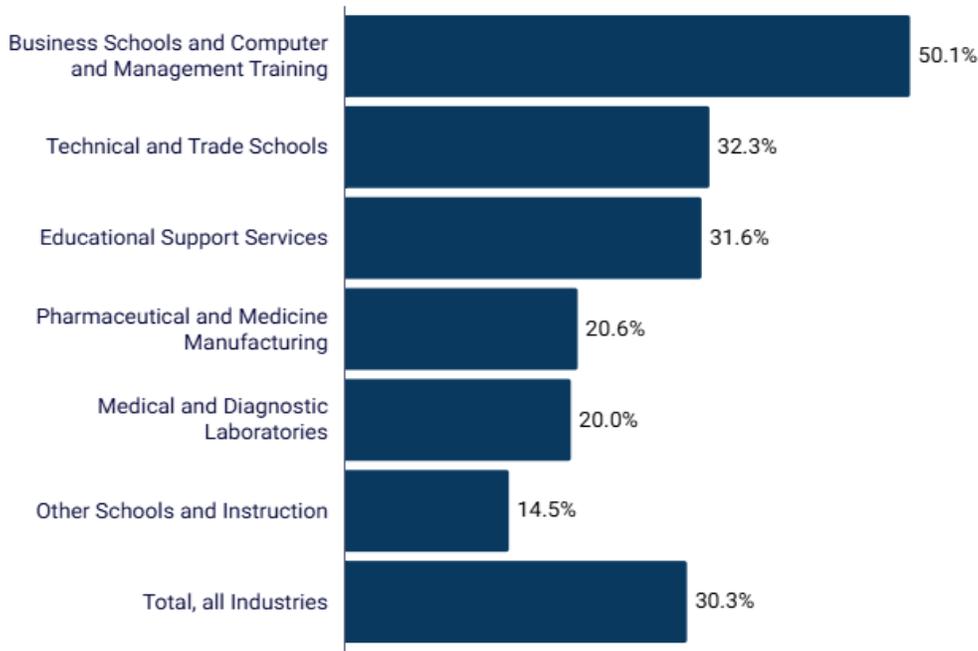
Graduation Retention Rates

Core Tech Industries 2025



Graduation Retention Rates

Cross Sector Overlay 2025



Graduate Retention Patterns

Retention varies widely across occupations:

- **Computer User Support Specialists** – 33% retained
- **Web Developers** – 30.9%
- **Network & Computer Systems Administrators** – 28.6%
- **Database Architects** – 27.7%
- **Software Developers** – 26%
- **Information Security Analysts** – 20.2%
- Research-oriented fields (e.g., database administrators, statisticians, computer research scientists) show retention rates **below 20%**

These patterns suggest that graduates are more likely to stay local in roles aligned with help desk, web development, systems administration, and software support — occupations strongly represented by regional employers.

Industry-Level Retention

Retention also varies across industries. According to **RERI analysis of Lightcast industry-level retention data (2025)**:

- **Management, Scientific & Technical Consulting Services** retain 36.6% of local graduates
- **Electrical Equipment Manufacturing** and related advanced manufacturing sectors retain around 28%
- **Software Publishers** retain only 22%
- **Computer Systems Design & Related Services** retains 18.6%

These differences reflect the distribution of tech-first vs. tech-enabled roles across the region.

K–12, Workforce, and Higher Education Alignment

Southwest Florida’s educational institutions — including FGCU, Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW), technical colleges, and local school districts — are expanding their offerings in cybersecurity, networking, cloud technologies, and applied computing. K–12 academies continue to introduce coding, robotics, and digital skills at earlier ages.

However, despite these efforts, **local demand for AI, data analytics, and cloud-aligned talent continues to outpace supply**. Employer conversations across the region indicate increased interest in short-cycle certificates, upskilling programs, and industry-aligned microcredentials. See Section 8 for further information on programs.

Opportunity for Growth

The talent pipeline represents one of the greatest opportunities for the region. Increasing retention — through internships, apprenticeships, employer partnerships, and career-path visibility — will help Southwest Florida build a more sustainable foundation for tech growth.

Insights

“Employer–college partnerships on short-cycle certificates can quickly expand local capacity.”

Bill Welch, CareerSource SWFL

“For every four graduates from SWFL institutions employed in a core tech industry nationwide, only one is employed locally — reflecting the region’s early-stage retention challenge.”

Amir B. Ferreira Neto, RERI

5. In-Demand Skills & Certifications

Employer demand across Southwest Florida continues to evolve as the region’s technology ecosystem matures. Job postings reflect a balanced need for both **foundational IT competencies** and **emerging skills** that support cloud services, cybersecurity, data analytics, and AI-aligned workflows. These patterns mirror national trends while also reflecting the region’s unique industry mix — healthcare, med-tech, education, logistics, construction tech, and professional services.

According to **CareerSource Southwest Florida and JobsEQ demand data (2024–2025)**, the most frequently requested technical skills include:

Top Technical Skills



These skills reinforce the region’s concentration in software, systems, and data-enabled roles — and align closely with the occupations RERI identified as core regional strengths.

Critical Soft Skills in Demand

Tech employers in Southwest Florida consistently value:

- Analytical thinking and problem-solving
- Communication and collaboration
- Adaptability and willingness to learn
- Project management and task ownership

These competencies reflect the cross-functional nature of many regional tech roles, which often blend customer support, digital operations, and applied technical troubleshooting.

Most Valued Certifications

Based on **CareerSource SWFL certification demand patterns**, the credentials most often requested by regional employers include:



These certifications align with strong wage premiums and provide accessible entry points into cybersecurity, networking, project management, and cloud-aligned roles.

What This Means for the Region

Southwest Florida’s demand profile suggests a **maturing technology workforce** that increasingly requires:

- more cloud and data-aligned pathways,
- more cybersecurity and networking professionals, and
- more short-cycle credentials to meet employer timelines.

As the region continues to grow, targeted investments in **AI literacy, data analytics, cloud certificates, and cybersecurity bootcamps** can accelerate the development of a robust local talent pool.

Insight

“Security, data, and cloud certifications align with the strongest wage premiums region-wide.”

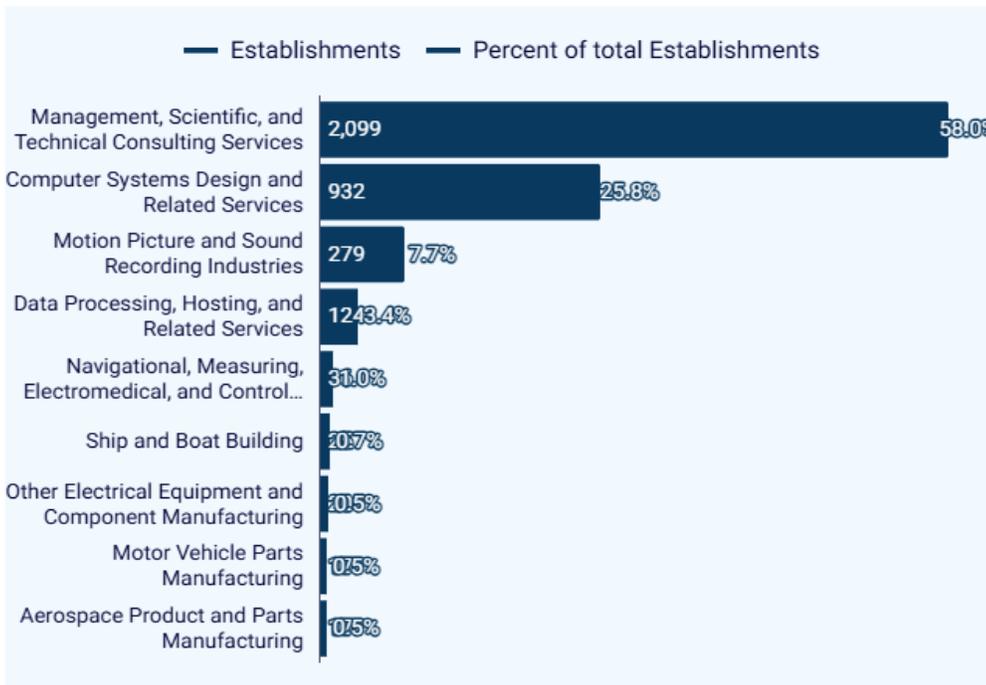
Bill Welch, CareerSource SWFL

6. Regional Competitiveness

Southwest Florida’s competitiveness in the technology economy is shaped by a combination of workforce growth, industry mix, quality of life, and emerging innovation activity. While the region remains early in its tech development compared to larger Florida metros, the data reflects clear upward momentum — particularly in professional services, med-tech, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing.

Core Tech Establishments 2024

Consulting services account for 58% of Southwest Florida’s tech establishments — more than double the next sector.



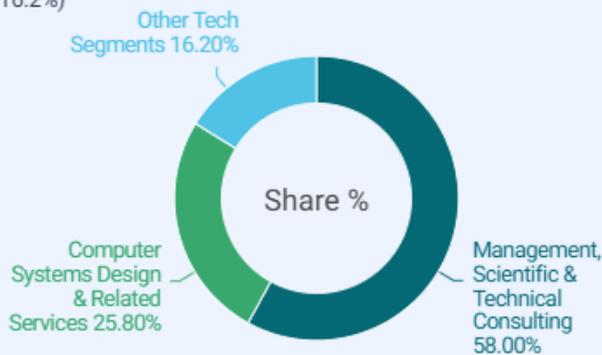
According to **FGCU RERI analysis of Lightcast data (2024)**, Southwest Florida is home to **3,618 tech-related establishments**, with the strongest concentrations in:

Core Industries & Business Landscape

3,618 tech-related establishments across the region (2024)

Largest industry segments

Consulting (58%) • Computer Systems Design (25.8%) • Other (16.2%)



Cross-sector tech intensity

Sector
Medical & Diagnostic Laboratories
Education & Training Services
Pharmaceutical & Life Sciences

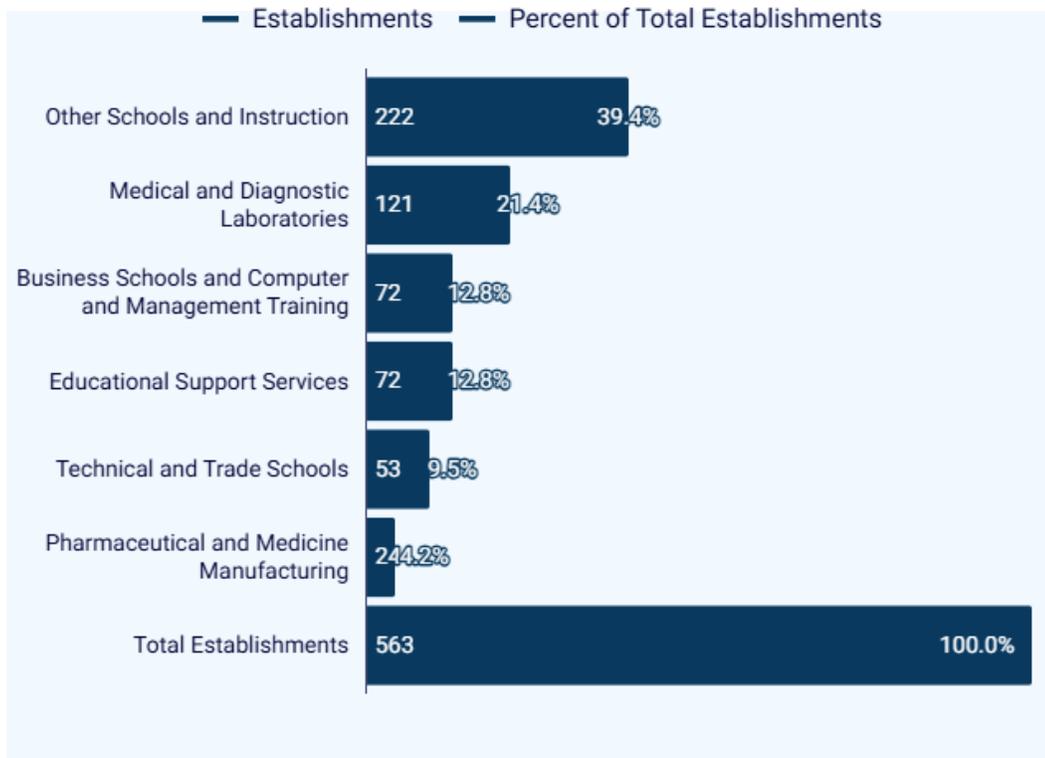
Tech capabilities extend into healthcare, education, and life sciences—reflecting a broader digital transformation across the regional economy.

- **Management, Scientific & Technical Consulting Services** – 2,099 establishments
- **Computer Systems Design & Related Services** – 932
- **Motion Picture & Sound Recording Industries** – 279
- **Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services** – 124

These segments support digital transformation across sectors including healthcare, logistics, education, finance, and construction — all major economic pillars for the region.

Cross-Sector Tech Intensity

SWFL Cross-Sector Establishments 2024



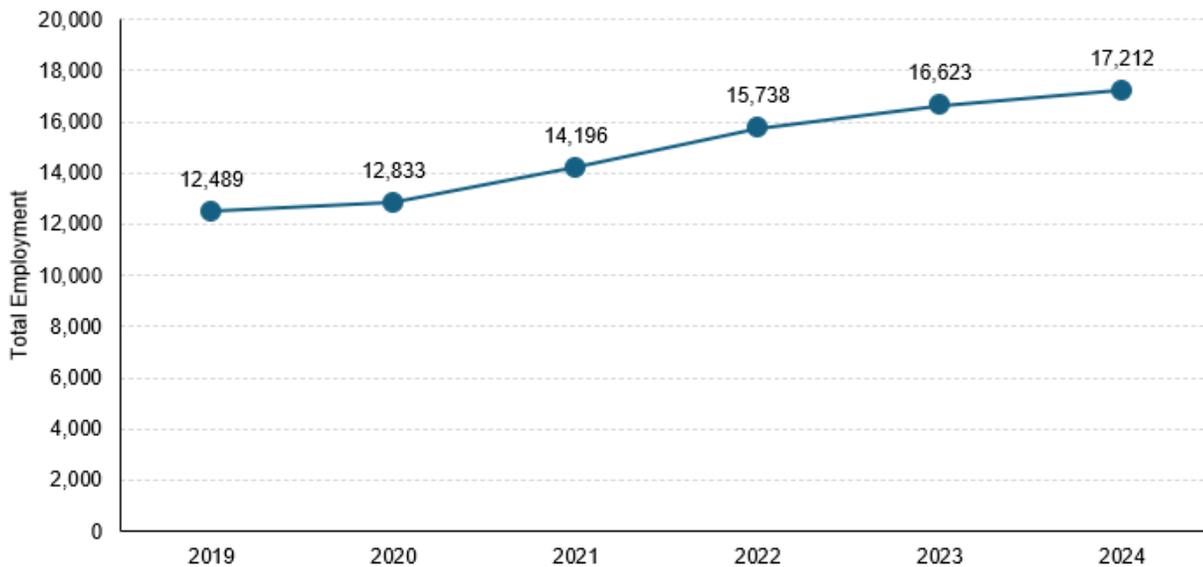
Tech participation is not limited to traditional tech firms. According to **RERI's industry overlay analysis (Lightcast 2024)**, industries with strong tech adjacency include:

- **Medical & Diagnostic Laboratories** – 2,015 employees
- **Other Schools and Instruction** – 1,762
- **Educational Support Services** – 523
- **Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing** – 222

These cross-sector roles strengthen the region's competitiveness by embedding technology into foundational industries like healthcare, education, and life sciences.

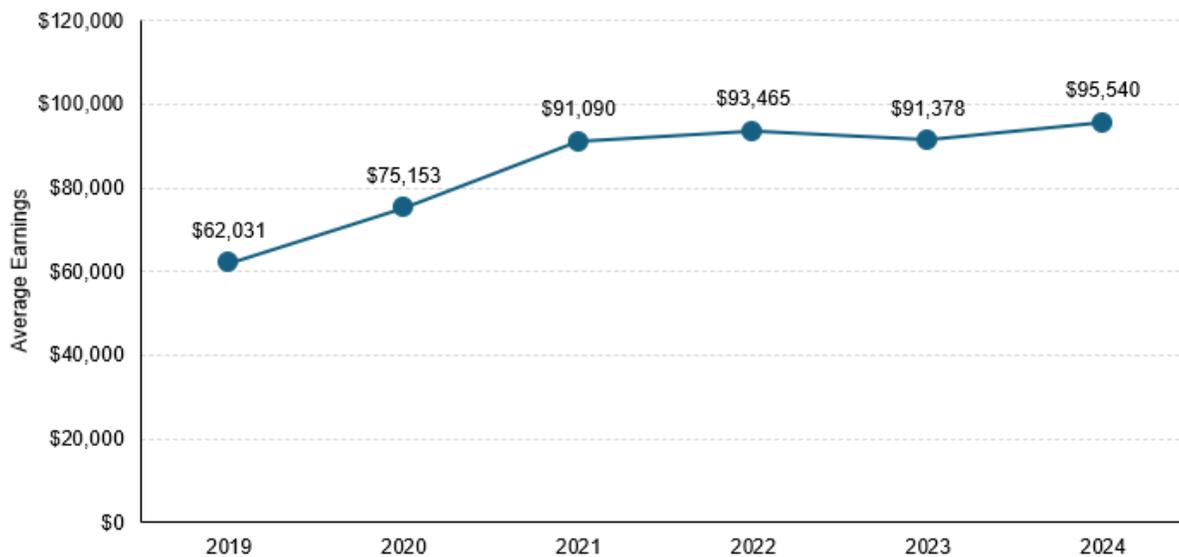
Competitive Advantages

Chart 3. Southwest Florida Core Tech Industry Employment, 2019 to 2024



Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from [Lightcast](#)

Chart 6. Southwest Florida Cross-Sector Overlay Average Earnings, 2019 to 2024



Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from [Lightcast](#)

Southwest Florida benefits from several strategic assets:

- **High quality of life and affordability** attractive to mid-career tech talent
- **Strong anchors** in med-tech (Arthrex), biotech (NeoGenomics), cybersecurity (Cigent), and digital services
- **Emerging early-stage capital networks**, including Tamiami Angels and Cap Table Nation

- **Higher education momentum**, including FGCU’s AI Institute and expanded programs in cybersecurity and analytics
- **Strong population growth**, expanding both the talent pool and market base

These strengths help position the region as a rising destination for tech-enabled companies and professionals seeking impact, affordability, and quality of life.

Challenges & Opportunities

While momentum is strong, Southwest Florida still faces challenges typical of emerging tech hubs:

- **Lower graduate retention** in some tech fields
- **Limited startup density** compared to larger metros
- **Gaps in mid-career technical specialization**
- **Need for expanded data, AI, and cloud training pathways**

These challenges represent opportunities for coordinated investment and collective action — especially as regional partners strengthen alignment across education, workforce, and economic development systems.

Insights

“SWFL’s quality of life is a differentiator for recruiting mid-career tech talent.”

John Talmage, Lee County EDO

“While Southwest Florida’s Core Tech sector is growing and diversifying, employment remains concentrated in four primary sub-industries: Management, Scientific & Technical Consulting Services; Computer Systems Design & Related Services; Software Publishing; and Computing Infrastructure and Hosting.”

Amir B. Ferreira Neto, RERI

7. SWFL Tech: Rebuilding our Regional Tech Council

SWFL Tech connects the people and organizations shaping Southwest Florida's technology future — from startups and educators to employers, investors, and community leaders. As a volunteer-led nonprofit, it champions collaboration, celebrates innovation, and creates opportunities for connection through programs like TechMatch, regional mixers, and student initiatives. Formally known as the SWFL Regional Tech Partnership founded in 2008, 2025 was a rebuilding year for the organization.

SWFL Tech - Investors (2025)



Board of Directors

- Laura Schmidt, President & Board Chair (Lee)
- Gabriel Denny, Treasurer (Lee)
- Debbie Peterson, Secretary (Lee)
- Chuck Hausman, Governance Chair (Lee)
- Wendi Fowler, Finance Chair (Collier)
- Ed Fritz, Director of Workforce (Charlotte)
- Warren Baucom, Director of Economic Development (Lee)
- Justin Jaffry, Director of Marketing (Collier)
- Jacquelyn Mosier, Director of Membership (Lee)
- Wes Sprecher, Director of Community (Lee)
- John Schlager, CIO Advisory (Lee)

Note: SWFL Tech board nominations are considered on a rolling basis. We continue to seek out nominations from the following counties: Hendry, Glades, Sarasota, Manatee, DeSoto

Progress on 2025 Roadmap

 <p>2025 Roadmap</p>	Pillar	Completed	Next Steps
	Financial & Governance Stability	Secured sustainable revenue model with reserve. Ratified 501c3 policy and practice statements.	Develop earned revenue/grant strategy to address data informed gaps.
	Organizational Infrastructure	Modernized tech stack; clarified board roles and expectations; onboarded 3 new board members with needed skill sets.	Identify 3 additional board members to support succession planning for key roles.
	Visibility & Brand Presence	Relaunched newsletter; refreshed brand presence.	Expanding newsletter reach + consistent narrative voice across region. Develop stronger media relations.
	Community & Workforce Ecosystem	Re-established quarterly socials. Held annual TechMatch recruitment event and Tech Night at the Ballpark.	Increase relevance of event planning to internal and external metrics.
	Regional Collaboration & Innovation	Established shared-objective partnerships.	Developing research + insights agenda to guide priority-setting.

2025 RESULTS



SWFL TECH

+10
Investors

4
Social Events

≈150
TechMatch Participants

2100+
Subscribers

300+
Newsletter Shoutouts

2000+
LinkedIn Impressions/Month

23%
Growth LinkedIn Followers

1320 hours

This year, our dedicated volunteers contributed **1320 hours** of service, showcasing their commitment and passion for our mission. Join us!

Across 2025 communications, SWFL Tech publicly recognized or elevated ~300 organizational contributions and ~20 individual leaders, representing visibility and connection for ~50+ distinct organizations across Southwest Florida’s tech ecosystem. SWFL Tech experienced 25% growth in its subscriber list as well as growth across all other internal metrics. The SWFL Tech board remains committed to its mission and will lead the organization with a passion for continuous improvement. For more information about SWFL Tech, please refer to their website: www.swfltech.org

Rebuilding SWFL Tech reminded us why this organization exists — to bring people together so that the tech community in Southwest Florida never loses its sense of connection or purpose.

Laura Schmidt, SWFL Tech President

8. Collective Commitment: Building the Ecosystem Together

Southwest Florida's technology momentum is not driven by any single organization — it is powered by a growing network of schools, colleges, employers, innovators, investors, nonprofits, and community groups working together to expand opportunity across the region. This shared commitment is one of the strongest signals that Southwest Florida is evolving into an emerging tech hub.

The organizations featured throughout SWFL Tech's communications reflect a broad and active ecosystem. From early STEM engagement in K–12 to advanced research at FGCU, from startups building new digital tools to employers modernizing operations, each plays a role in shaping the Gulf Coast Tech Corridor. The following snapshot highlights contributors across key sectors.

K–12

Schools across the region are introducing early experiences in computing, robotics, and digital problem-solving — building a strong foundation for tomorrow's workforce.

- Bonita Springs Elementary – STEAM Lab introducing early robotics and coding.
- Dunbar High School – just one example of Lee County's technical academies and programs found across 40 Middle and High Schools providing real-world, hands-on partnerships with local businesses.
- FIRST Robotics Teams – Inspiring creativity, coding, and problem-solving among youth.

Higher Education & Research

Colleges and universities are expanding programs in AI, data science, cybersecurity, and applied research — strengthening the region's talent pipeline and innovation capacity.

- Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) – AI Institute, Data analytics, AI/ML programs, and RERI leadership.
- Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) – Expanding cybersecurity and applied technology programs.

Nonprofits & Ecosystem Builders

Nonprofit partners and regional organizations accelerate workforce development, support innovation, and strengthen the overall tech ecosystem through programs, events, and community leadership.

- CareerSource Southwest Florida – Workforce alignment and co-host of the annual TechMatch event.
- Horizon Foundation - Improving Lee County's business environment via public-private partnerships.
- SWFL Aspirations in Computing Affiliate (NCWIT) – Recognizing young women in computing.
- 35 Mules – Supporting early-stage innovation ventures.
- SWFL Tech – Convening, connecting, and promoting the regional technology community.
- The Edison Awards - Recognizing and fostering innovations and innovators.
- SWFL Inc. - Supporting, promoting, and protecting business and community success.
- BSides SWFL - Community-driven annual cybersecurity conference.
- The Immokalee Foundation – expanding digital skills and AI exposure through its Microsoft TechSpark Fellowship.

Community Builders

These groups strengthen local identity, support peer learning, and build professional networks — all essential components of a healthy tech ecosystem.

- SWFL Tech Alliance
- Women in Tech & Entrepreneurship - Ft. Myers Chapter
- Naples Tech
- Sarasota Tech
- Lee County AI Meetup
- AI Collective - Naples Chapter

The strength of Southwest Florida's tech ecosystem lies in its connectivity — when educators, employers, startups, and investors collaborate, innovation grows faster and opportunities reach farther.

Laura Schmidt, SWFL Tech President

Tech Startups & Emerging Catalysts

These firms symbolize the region's early innovation activity and signal future growth potential in digital-first businesses.

- Writing.io – AI technology startup developing content-generation and automation tools.

Private Investment & Capital Network

Access to early-stage capital and mentorship is a critical driver of tech ecosystem development.

- Cap Table Nation - Expanding early-stage investment capacity to strengthen the regional startup ecosystem.
- Tamiami Angels Fund - Connecting entrepreneurs with early-stage capital and mentorship.

Industry Leaders

Established employers anchor regional expertise, attract talent, and drive the region's transition to more advanced digital operations.

- Arthrex – Global med-tech employer driving high-skill job creation.
- NeoGenomics – National biotech analytics operations in Fort Myers.
- Cigent – Cybersecurity and secure storage innovator headquartered in SWFL.
- Hertz – Leveraging analytics and digital transformation from Estero HQ.
- U.S. Sugar - Redefining agriculture through precision farming and automation.
- Gartner - Global IT research and advisory firm operating a major Fort Myers office.
- CallMiner – AI-driven speech-analytics leader.

A Collective Invitation

If your organization contributes to technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, digital skills, or workforce readiness anywhere in Southwest Florida, SWFL Tech welcomes you to connect and be included in next year's Tech Pulse report. #BetterTogether #SWFLTech

9. Forward Look: 2025–2030

The 2025 SWFL Tech Pulse Report is more than a snapshot of where Southwest Florida stands today — it is a shared starting point for what comes next. The data, momentum, and collaboration highlighted in this report point toward a region with the potential to become a recognized tech hub along Florida’s Gulf Coast. Over the next five years, collective action across education, workforce, industry, and community partners will be essential to unlocking that potential. Several themes emerged from the analysis that can guide regional strategy and investment through 2030.

AI Readiness and Data Capacity

As AI transforms every industry, Southwest Florida has an opportunity to lead by expanding:



- foundational AI literacy across sectors
- applied AI and data analytics training
- industry–education partnerships to integrate AI tools
- local employer capacity to adopt data-driven operations

Building shared benchmarks for AI readiness would strengthen regional competitiveness and help align talent development with employer needs.

Expansion of Cybersecurity, Data, and Cloud Programs

Tech workforce demand continues to grow across cybersecurity, cloud services, and data management. Strengthening regional capacity in these fields will require:



- expanding certificate and degree pathways
- increasing employer-sponsored upskilling
- scaling apprenticeships and internships
- enhancing access to short-cycle credentialing programs

These investments directly support high-wage opportunities and long-term workforce resilience.

Shared Regional Brand Identity

Southwest Florida’s technology community is gaining visibility, but continued progress will require a unified narrative for the **Gulf Coast Tech Corridor**. This includes:



Gulf Coast Tech Corridor

- strengthening the region’s presence in statewide and national tech conversations
- elevating success stories and innovation assets
- connecting sub-regional hubs into a cohesive brand
- fostering collaboration across county lines

A clear brand identity helps attract talent, employers, investors, and partners.

Strengthening the Startup and Innovation Pipeline

While the region’s startup ecosystem remains early-stage, momentum is building. Continued growth will depend on:

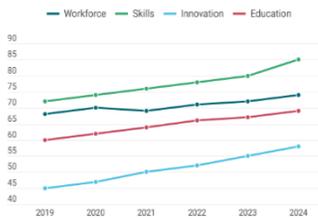


- increasing access to early-stage capital
- expanding mentorship networks
- supporting incubators and accelerators
- fostering cross-sector innovation communities

These ecosystem elements create the conditions for high-growth companies to emerge and scale locally.

Consistent Measurement and Shared Indicators

To track progress year over year, regional partners can benefit from:



- shared metrics spanning workforce, skills, innovation, and education
- annual comparative benchmarking
- continued collaboration across EDO, RERI, CareerSource, and SWFL Tech
- transparent data-sharing to align strategic priorities

A consistent measurement framework will support future versions of the SWFL Tech Pulse and guide long-term planning.

Insight

“The SWFL Tech Pulse 2025 is not an endpoint but a beginning — a shared foundation that gives Southwest Florida the data and language needed to guide collective action. Turning insight into strategy will depend on continued collaboration throughout the ecosystem.”

Laura Schmidt, President & Board Chair, SWFL Tech

10. About Our Collaborators

SWFL Tech



SWFL Tech is a volunteer-led nonprofit technology council that connects, strengthens, and elevates Southwest Florida’s emerging tech ecosystem. SWFL Tech serves as a unifying hub for people and organizations advancing technology, talent, and innovation across the Gulf Coast. SWFL Tech provides a monthly “What’s on Tech?” newsletter holds an annual regional TechMatch career event, partners with mission-aligned organizations, and holds quarterly socials to facilitate organic connections across the ecosystem.

Florida Gulf Coast University – Regional Economic Research Institute (RERI)



RERI provides rigorous, data-driven analysis that informs regional economic and workforce development. Using federal labor datasets, industry modeling, and applied economic research, RERI delivers objective insights that help leaders understand emerging industry trends, talent needs, and the region’s competitive position.

Lee County Economic Development Office (EDO)



The Lee County EDO supports business attraction, retention, and expansion by connecting companies with resources, talent, and community partners. The EDO provides economic data, site development guidance, and strategic support to strengthen Lee County’s position as a growing hub for technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

CareerSource Southwest Florida



CareerSource SWFL oversees workforce development across the region, providing labor market intelligence, employer services, job seeker programs, and training support. By aligning workforce supply with employer demand, CareerSource plays a central role in strengthening pathways into high-growth occupations and expanding regional talent capacity.

11. Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology and Sources

The 2025 SWFL Tech Pulse Report was developed through a collaborative process involving SWFL Tech, the Florida Gulf Coast University Regional Economic Research Institute (RERI), CareerSource Southwest Florida, and the Lee County Economic Development Office (EDO). The report synthesizes multiple data sources, partner-provided analyses, and regional insights to create a comprehensive snapshot of Southwest Florida’s growing technology ecosystem.

Primary Data Sources

- **FGCU RERI Analysis of Lightcast Data (2024–2025)**
Provided occupation-level employment, wage trends, industry employment, graduate retention rates, cross-sector overlays, establishment counts, and the regional heat map.
- **CareerSource Southwest Florida / JobsEQ Data (2024–2025)**
Provided job posting analytics, skills and certification demand, and workforce alignment insights.
- **SWFL Tech Communications Archive (2025)**
Including monthly newsletters, organizational highlights, event data, and ecosystem recognitions.
- **Regional Economic and Workforce Resources (2024–2025)**
Including CareerSource SWFL regional profiles and partner-supplied contextual information.

Analytical Approach

- Workforce data was aggregated across five core counties: Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades.
- Industry definitions followed NAICS codes for core tech sectors and tech-adjacent sectors as provided by RERI.
- Occupation definitions followed SOC codes consistent with federal labor classifications.
- Graduate retention reflects regional completions and in-region employment one year post-completion.
- Trend lines reflect 2019–2024 employment and wage data.
- The regional heat map (2024) provided spatial insights into tech density and emerging hubs.

Interpretation and Narrative Development

Narrative sections were informed by partner interviews, SWFL Tech’s 2025 communications, and collaborative review among the four contributing organizations. Each section integrates quantitative data with contextual insights to reflect the region’s unique characteristics, opportunities, and emerging momentum.

Generative AI tools were used to support narrative drafting, organization, and editorial clarity during the development of this report. All quantitative data, analysis, interpretations, and final language were **reviewed and approved** by SWFL Tech, FGCU RERI, CareerSource Southwest Florida, and the Lee County Economic Development Office prior to publication. All findings and conclusions represent the consensus of partner organizations.

Appendix B: Reference Links

Below are the primary external reference sources that informed contextual elements of the report:

- **JobsEQ (2025). Tech Sector Metrics Report – Southwest Florida**
Chmura Economics & Analytics
<https://www.chmura.com/jobseq>
- **SWFL Tech (2025). Mailchimp Newsletter Archive**
<https://us17.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=dc5333eadc262c3548b99fb3b&id=a2e14aad25>
- **CompTIA (2025). State of the Tech Workforce 2025**
<https://www.comptia.org/resources/state-of-the-tech-workforce>
- **Brookings Institution (2024). Mapping the AI Economy**
<https://www.brookings.edu>
- **CBRE (2024). Scoring Tech Talent 2024**
<https://www.cbre.com>