



MONTHLY MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Space Coast Aerospace & Defense Hiring Report

Brevard County, Florida • July 2026 Edition

Tracking who is hiring, what they pay, the contracts shaping demand, and where the Space Coast aerospace and defense workforce is headed — compiled monthly for employers, job seekers, and the regional community.

Prepared by Intrepidus Talent Solutions — specialist aerospace & defense staffing for Florida's Space Coast.

Why this report

If you hire, recruit, or work in aerospace & defense on the Space Coast, this report is built for you.

Each month, it answers the questions that matter most in this market, using public, verifiable data: Who is hiring right now, and for what roles? What does the market actually pay here? Which federal contracts will create the next wave of jobs? Is the local market expanding or contracting?

Hiring managers and HR teams use it to benchmark pay and see who they're competing with for talent. Recruiters use it to spot where demand is moving. Job seekers — including transitioning military — use it to find who's hiring and what it takes to qualify.

This is Issue No. 2 — the first with month-over-month change. June's issue set the baseline; the Openings Index now reports its first — provisional — month-over-month change against the same fixed employer list, counted the same way (comparability notes in the Index section). Methodology and sourcing for every number are consolidated at the back of the report.

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The Monthly Pulse

The Space Coast aerospace and defense market grew again this month — and for the first time, we can measure it. Our Openings Index — a same-date count from a **fixed list of 23 named Space Coast A&D employers** (16 posted openings this month; four list members have no current Brevard operations and are pending removal at the September list review) — recorded **~1,547 open roles, up about 134 (+9.5%) from June's 1,413 baseline** — a provisional first month-over-month reading (comparability notes in the Index section). The standing caveat still applies: the Index is a **defined sample built for month-to-month comparability, not a census of every aerospace opening in Brevard County** (full scope notes are in the appendix). Within the tracked sample, concentration tightened further: **Blue Origin, Northrop Grumman, L3Harris, Lockheed Martin, and SpaceX together hold about 89% of the roles we counted** (Amentum fell out of the top five this month — more below).

Three themes stand out this month. **Manufacturing acceleration:** the growth is at the production primes — Blue Origin added 73 tracked openings amid its New Glenn ramp, Northrop Grumman added roughly 128 in Melbourne, and Leonardo DRS jumped 57% — while the month's biggest award headlines (L3Harris's reported ~\$955M "Golden Dome" satellite win, and Lockheed's July-publicized \$850M Trident modernization — awarded in April) point to more demand behind it. **The talent war has gone financial:** SpaceX's June IPO minted an estimated 4,400 employee millionaires, and Blue Origin answered within weeks with a sweetened stock-option incentive carrying an 18-month competitor-forfeiture clause — a compensation arms race with direct consequences for every Space Coast employer competing for the same technicians and engineers (this month's Spotlight). **A contractor-tier pullback:** the base-and-range operations tier fell sharply (Amentum

117→~37, Jacobs 25→2 tracked openings) in what looks like a posting lull tied to KSC contract consolidation rather than announced job cuts — no WARN notices accompany it — but it is the number to watch this quarter.

This month's Spotlight examines **skilled technicians and A&P mechanics** — the trades tier of the market, where demand is broadest (over half of Embraer's openings), pay claims are hardest to verify, and the new equity war is being fought. On the downside watch, **no Space Coast A&D layoff (WARN) notices were filed this period**; the signal in the tracked sample remains expansion-leaning.

This month at a glance¹

Indicator	Reading	Note
Open A&D roles in the Index (23-employer sample)	~1,547 ▲	+134 vs June (+9.5%) — provisional first month-over-month reading
Top-5 share of tracked roles	~89%	Blue Origin, Northrop, L3Harris, Lockheed, SpaceX
Biggest movers (tracked)	Northrop +128, Blue Origin +73; Amentum –80	Manufacturing up, base-ops tier down
Major award headlines	L3Harris ~\$955M (reported, Jul 13); Lockheed \$850M (Apr award, publicized Jul)	Golden Dome satellites; Trident D5LE2
National aerospace mfg. employment	587,700 (May, prelim.) ▲	+4.3% year over year — new post-2016 high
Cape launch cadence	6 in June; ~47 YTD	Behind 2025's record pace (~20%)
Major WARN / layoff notices (Brevard A&D)	None this period	Second straight clean month

Indicator	Reading	Note
Hiring outlook (tracked sample)	Expansion-leaning ▲	+9.5% Index growth; no Brevard A&D WARN

Space Coast Openings Index

The Openings Index is this report's primary monthly metric — a same-date count of open aerospace & defense roles across a fixed list of 23 Space Coast employers, taken from official company sources.

Scope note: the Index is a **fixed 23-employer sample built for month-to-month comparability — not a census of every A&D opening in Brevard County**. Four tracked names (Space Perspective, Rocket Lab, Terran Orbital, Beyond Gravity) currently have no Brevard operations — they contribute zero roles, and the effective local sample is 19 employers pending the September list review. All share and concentration figures below describe the tracked sample, not the whole local market. Full scope detail and methodology are in the appendix.²

This month's count

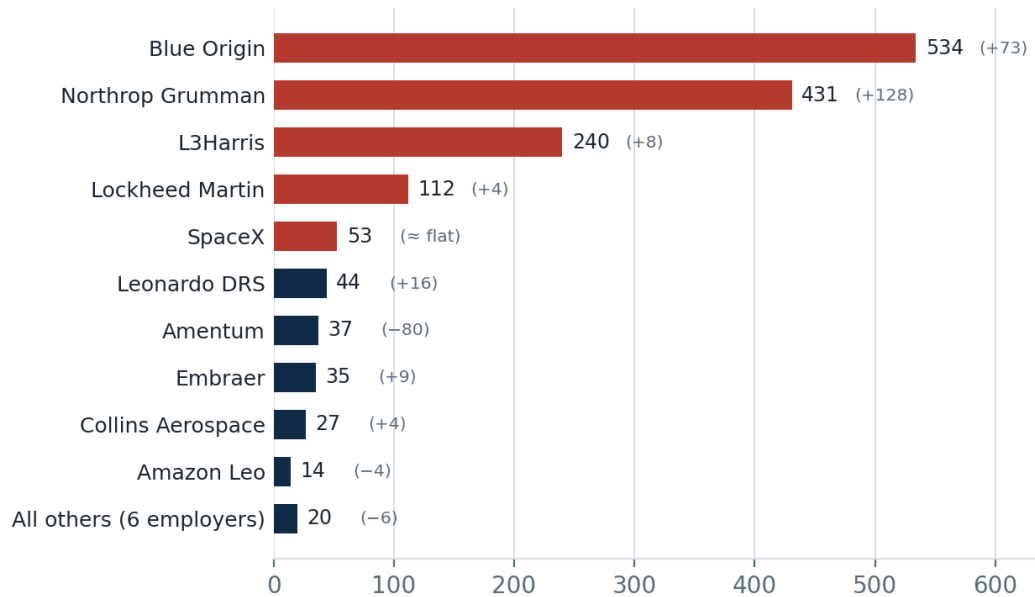
~1,547 open A&D roles across the 23 tracked employers (counted July 17, 2026) — **up about 134 roles, or +9.5%, from June's 1,413.**

This is the Index's first month-over-month reading — and we label it **provisional**: the same 23 companies, counted from the same official careers sites, across all Brevard County locations, cross-checked against Indeed. Two employer figures are cross-checked estimates this month (SpaceX and Collins Aerospace — their sites blocked automated reading at pull time; both are labeled below and in the appendix), and two figures carry site-change notes (Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin — their careers sites changed how locations are displayed; see appendix²). The upward direction of the overall move holds under every alternative treatment we tested; the exact magnitude depends on those estimates and site changes — which is why the headline carries a "~".

By employer (top of the list)

Open A&D roles by tracked employer — July 2026

Openings Index: ~1,547 roles across 23 tracked Space Coast employers, +9.5% vs June (change in parentheses). The top five (red) hold ~89% of the sample.



Employer	July	June	Change	Primary Space Coast site
Blue Origin	534	461	▲ +73	Merritt Island (New Glenn)
Northrop Grumman	~431	303	▲ +128	Melbourne (B-21, space & missile systems)
L3Harris	240	232	▲ +8	Palm Bay + Melbourne
Lockheed Martin	112	108	▲ +4*	Cape Canaveral + Titusville + KSC
SpaceX	~53	54	≈ flat	Cape Canaveral (Starship)
Leonardo DRS	44	28	▲ +16	Melbourne (electro-optical/infrared)
Amentum	~37	117	▼ -80	KSC base operations + Eastern Range
Embraer	35	26	▲ +9	Melbourne (executive jet assembly)
Collins Aerospace	~27	23	▲ +4	Melbourne (avionics)
Amazon Leo (form. Kuiper)	14	18	▼ -4	Merritt Island (satellite processing)
Boeing	8	9	▼ -1	Titusville
KBR	3	3	—	Patrick SFB (Space Force support)
Leidos	3	3	—	Cape Canaveral

Employer	July	June	Change	Primary Space Coast site
Custom Aerospace	3	~2	▲ +1	Palm Bay
Jacobs	2	25	▼ -23	Cape Canaveral
Sierra Space	1	1	—	Kennedy Space Center

*The remaining tracked companies (Redwire, Bechtel, and several smaller suppliers) posted no Brevard openings this month. *Lockheed's careers site added a separate "Kennedy Space Center" location listing this month (25 roles, included per our all-Brevard rule); June's count may have grouped those roles differently, so Lockheed's month-over-month change is approximate.*

What's driving the number

The growth is concentrated in space and defense manufacturing. Blue Origin added 73 tracked openings (461 → 534) as its New Glenn and Blue Moon production ramp continued — notably, hiring *accelerated* in the weeks after the May 28 loss of a New Glenn booster in pre-launch testing (see *This Month on the Space Coast*). Northrop Grumman's Melbourne campus added roughly 128 tracked openings; the company's postings surged nationwide over the same period, so part of that rise reflects company-wide momentum, but Melbourne's share of Northrop's total openings actually ticked up. Leonardo DRS grew 57% (28 → 44), led by supply-chain and program-management roles. Embraer added 9 — and its mix is the purest trades signal in the sample (over half skilled trades; see Spotlight).

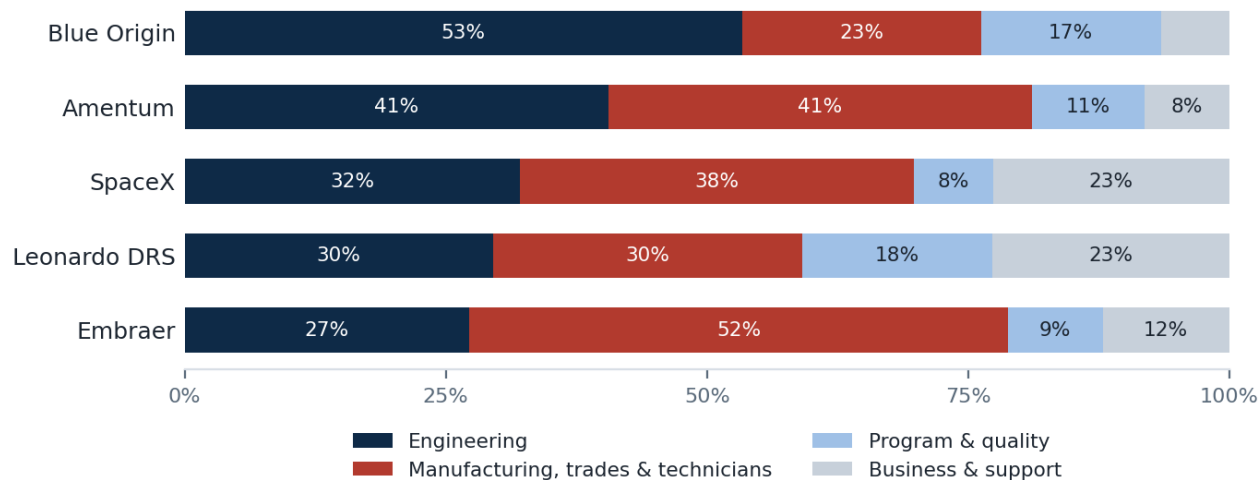
The counterweight is the contractor tier. The base-and-range operations tier — steady in June at 148 tracked roles — fell to roughly 45 this month. Amentum's tracked openings dropped from 117 to about 37, and Jacobs from 25 to 2, as ground-systems work at KSC consolidates under Amentum (which absorbed Jacobs' KSC business unit) and the current contract period approaches an option decision this fall. Two honest cautions: first, this is a **posting lull, not announced job cuts** — no WARN filings accompany it and we found no layoff announcements; second, aggregate posting counts for this tier were harder to verify this month than last (several contractor sites became unreadable to automated tools), so the tier's exact level carries more uncertainty than the anchors'. We will re-verify early next month.

Concentration tightened. The top five tracked employers now hold roughly **89%** of the Index (86% in June) — and the top-five club changed: SpaceX re-entered and Amentum dropped out. Blue Origin alone accounts for more than a third of all tracked openings.

By role family

Who's hiring hands-on vs. engineering talent — July 2026

Share of each employer's Space Coast openings by role family — the five tracked employers publishing category data this month (L3Harris's per-site categories were unavailable at pull time). Sorted by engineering share.



Five tracked employers published usable role-category detail this month — L3Harris's per-site category data was unavailable at pull time (site change), so it rotates out of this chart until it returns. The pattern holds from June: Blue Origin and Leonardo DRS skew engineering-led; Embraer is the inverse, with more than half of its openings in skilled trades — A&P mechanics, assembly, paint, upholstery, and avionics technicians.

Across the employers whose sites break roles down by category, the demand splits into the same four broad families as June:

- **Engineering** remains the largest category at the big primes — Blue Origin's Space Coast postings alone include ~285 engineering-keyword roles, and Northrop's Melbourne campus (B-21, space & missile systems) is engineering-dominant by design.
- **Skilled trades & technicians** are this month's Spotlight — and the demand is broad: Embraer (majority of openings), Blue Origin (~60 technician-keyword postings), SpaceX (~15 of its ~53, from welders to launch-pad and thermal-hardware technicians), and Amentum (~40% of its reduced count).
- **Program & quality** — program managers, schedulers, and quality/mission-assurance specialists — appear across nearly every employer; Leonardo DRS's growth this month leans this way.
- **Manufacturing, operations & supply chain** round out the mix, with DRS adding ~11 supply-chain roles.

Likely among the hardest to fill this month: certified A&P mechanics and experienced assembly/avionics technicians (see Spotlight), plus cleared engineers — the same two categories flagged in June. This reflects recurring requirements in tracked postings and Intrepidus's recruiting experience rather than measured time-to-fill data.

Contracts & the Demand Signal

Federal contract awards are a directional signal of future hiring — work awarded today is staffed over the following quarters. Tracking awards performed on the Space Coast, from public federal records, is one of this report's differentiators.³

Every figure below is filtered to a **Brevard County place of performance** — so we count only work performed here, not awards a local company performs out of state. Important caveat: a Brevard place of performance establishes local relevance, but it does **not** by itself prove incremental local hiring. Existing staff, subcontractors, remote workers, or non-labor spending may absorb part of the work.

The scale: 2,525 active federal contract records carried a Brevard County place of performance with FY2026 activity as of our June pull (this census figure is refreshed quarterly; the fresh-award list below is new each month). They span Navy aircraft, ballistic-missile production, NASA spaceflight, and the day-to-day operation of the spaceport itself.

The anchor programs (largest active prime-award records)

Awardee	Program	Obligations on record	Where
Northrop Grumman	E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft (U.S. Navy)	\$8.5B + \$5.4B	Melbourne
SpaceX	Commercial Crew transportation (NASA)	\$3.0B	Kennedy Space Center
Lockheed Martin	Trident II D5 / D5LE2 missile production (U.S. Navy)	\$2.9B	Titusville
L3Harris	NOAA & FAA ground and communications systems	\$1.8B	Palm Bay / Melbourne
Amentum	KSC Base Operations & Spaceport Services (BOSS)	\$608M	Kennedy Space Center
Boeing	Commercial Crew / Starliner (NASA)	\$361M	Kennedy Space Center

Each line is a single USASpending **prime-award record**, shown as total obligations to date on that record. Large programs often span multiple award records — NASA's Commercial Crew, for example, comprises several contract records per provider, so a program's full value can be far larger than any one line here. These figures show where federal money is anchored — they are **not** program totals, ceilings, or single-year local spend. Record-level award IDs will be published with the September quarterly contract refresh.

Award headlines — the forward signal

This was a headline month for missile-defense demand at two of the region's anchor programs:

- **Lockheed Martin — \$850M Trident II D5LE2 development modification (awarded in April; publicized by Lockheed July 10).** The Navy's next-generation submarine-launched missile program, with Florida among the named work locations. Lockheed's program leadership says the company is "**expanding its workforce**" — recruiting engineers, technicians, and other professionals — and the award feeds directly into the **\$140M, 225,000-sq-ft Titusville production facility** (~300 jobs, operational target 2027) covered in our June issue. This is the clearest contract-to-local-hiring line in this month's data.
- **L3Harris — reported ~\$955M Space Force award for 18 "Golden Dome" missile-tracking satellites (July 13).** L3Harris will build 18 more missile-defense tracking satellites — bringing its order book to **more than 70** — with satellite **integration running through its Palm Bay facility**, expanded last year and reported at full capacity since January. Satellite manufacturing occurs in Indiana; the Palm Bay integration line is the local demand signal. (Award value as reported by Reuters; L3Harris's release does not state a figure.)
- **Blue Origin — first national-security launch task order for New Glenn (late May).** The Space Force assigned Blue Origin an NRO mission (NTO-4) under the NSSL Phase 3 Lane 1 program, to fly from Cape Canaveral in the late-2027/early-2028 window — announced the day after the New Glenn test anomaly, a notable vote of confidence that sustains Cape launch-and-integration work.
- Also of note at the corporate level: L3Harris won a **\$499.6M** Missile Defense Agency contract (July 6) to operate an airborne sensing fleet for interceptor test verification — headquartered locally, though the work is performed mostly out of state, so we do not count it as a local demand signal.

Why it matters for hiring: the two big awards in this month's headlines are both *missile-defense manufacturing* wins that run through Brevard facilities — Titusville (missile components) and Palm Bay (satellite integration). Both employers already sit in the Index's top four. Industry experience suggests awards translate into related postings over subsequent quarters; this report does not yet measure that local award-to-posting lag.

Out for bid — the earliest signal

The June issue detailed the active solicitation pipeline — NASA KSC's support-services recompetes (engineering services, fire, and protective services) and the Space Force's Eastern Range instrumentation recompete. Those competitions were in evaluation or final-response stages as of June and remain the pipeline to watch; we will refresh the full solicitation review in the quarterly flagship (September). One date now on the calendar: the current KSC ground-systems contract (COMET, held by Amentum) reaches the end of its base period around the end of September — the government's option decision is a significant marker for the contractor tier of the Index, whose posting pullback this month is discussed above.

What the Market Pays

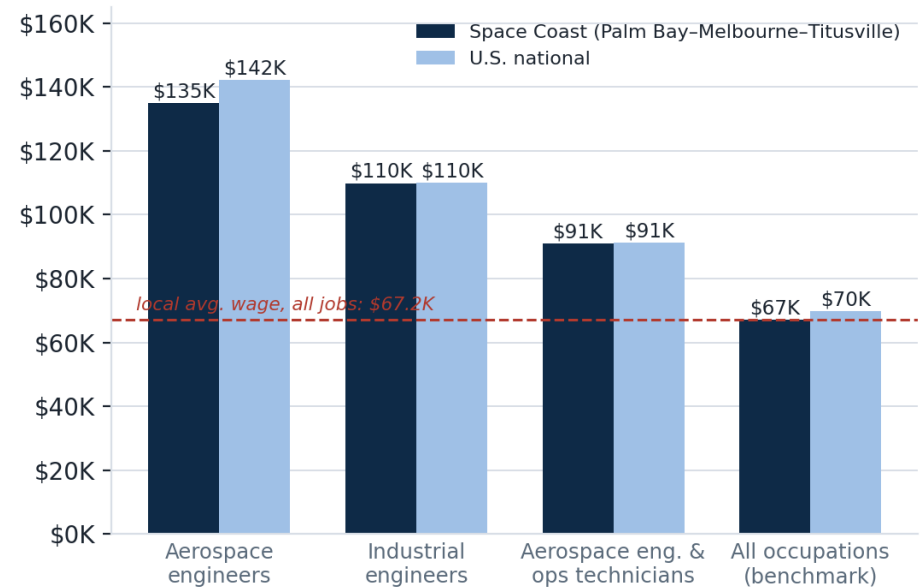
Salary benchmarks are among the data most requested by both job seekers and hiring managers.⁴

All figures here are the official BLS Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics for the **Palm Bay–Melbourne–Titusville metro** (May 2025 — still the latest release; the next annual update arrives in spring 2027), shown as the **average annual wage** and compared to the **national** average for the same occupation. These benchmarks are unchanged from June because the official data is unchanged — not because we didn't look.

One new wage signal did land this quarter: Brevard County's **average weekly wage across all industries** reached **\$1,416 in Q4 2025**, up **6.7% year over year** — **tied for the largest gain among Florida's large counties** (BLS County Employment and Wages). The county's total employment stood at ~245,400. That's economy-wide, not A&D-specific — but it says the local wage base A&D employers recruit against is rising quickly.

A&D pay: at national par — well above the local wage base

Average annual wage, BLS OEWS May 2025 (latest release). A&D roles pay national-scale salaries in a ~\$67K local-wage market.



Occupation	Local avg. wage	National avg.	Local employment
Computer hardware engineers	\$149,930	—	500
Aerospace engineers	\$134,950	\$142,060	1,360
Electronics engineers	\$125,770	—	970
Industrial engineers	\$109,840	\$109,900	2,030
Aerospace engineering & operations technicians	\$91,030	\$91,310	480

Occupation	Local avg. wage	National avg.	Local employment
Aircraft mechanics & service technicians	\$71,960	—	660
Machinists	\$57,500	—	560
All occupations (local benchmark)	\$67,210	\$69,770	245,170

The real story: premium *jobs*, not just premium pay

The main wage finding is unchanged and worth restating for new readers. Space Coast aerospace wages are **not** dramatically higher than the national average for the same jobs — local aerospace engineers (\$134,950) run a touch *below* the national mean (\$142,060), and aerospace technicians (\$91,030) and industrial engineers (\$109,840) sit essentially *at* the national average.

What makes the Space Coast a premium market is the comparison **against the local economy**. The average wage across all jobs in the metro is **\$67,210**. Against that benchmark:

- An **aerospace engineer** (\$134,950) earns about **2×** the local average wage.
- An **industrial engineer** (\$109,840) — the region's largest engineering occupation by employment at ~2,030 jobs — earns about **1.6×** the local average.
- An **aerospace technician** (\$91,030) earns about **35% more** than the local all-occupation mean.
- The premium is not uniform across the trades: an **aircraft mechanic** (\$71,960) sits modestly above the local average, while a **machinist** (\$57,500) sits *below* it. The clearest local premium is for engineers and aerospace technicians. (This month's Spotlight digs into what the trades market actually pays at the posting level.)

The takeaway, stated plainly: A&D professionals here earn national-scale salaries in a metro whose all-occupation mean wage is about \$67,000 — a wage base now rising fast (+6.7% on the weekly-wage measure above). One honest boundary: wages are not a cost-of-living measure, and this report does not yet publish one (a regional-price benchmark is planned for a future issue). Even so, the gap between a national A&D paycheck and the local wage base remains a central part of the recruiting story.

vs. national — the benchmark line

The U.S. average wage is **\$142,060 for aerospace engineers** and **\$91,310 for aerospace engineering & operations technicians** (BLS, May 2025). The Space Coast pays right in line on both — competitive enough to recruit nationally, in a market whose overall wage base sits well below those salaries.

This Month on the Space Coast

A fast-moving roundup of the developments that move the local labor market — refreshed every issue so the report always has news, not just numbers.⁵

The month's defining story: rocket money

Three connected events in six weeks have changed the economics of working in the Space Coast's space industry:

- **SpaceX went public (June 12).** Priced at \$135 per share, the stock closed its first day up 19% — putting SpaceX's market value **above \$2 trillion** — and by most press accounts made roughly **4,400 current and former employees millionaires** on paper. That widely cited figure is a national estimate: how many of those employees are on the Space Coast is not published, and lockup provisions limit near-term selling. SpaceX nonetheless employs thousands here, so some share of that paper wealth sits locally.
- **Blue Origin lost a rocket — and kept hiring (May 28 / June 30).** A New Glenn first stage was destroyed in a pre-launch static-fire anomaly at Launch Complex 36; the rocket was being prepared to launch 48 Amazon Leo satellites, and no payload was aboard during the test. The company cleared the wreckage in nine days, says flights resume **by year's end**, and — the fact most relevant to this report — its tracked Space Coast openings *rose* from 461 to 534 over the period. Lunar-mission timelines slip to early 2027; the local production and launch-site workforce is, if anything, being reinforced for the return-to-flight push.
- **Blue Origin answered the IPO with stock options — and handcuffs (July 16).** Days before this issue, Fortune reported Blue Origin rolled out a sweetened employee stock-option package, widely read as a retention response to SpaceX's IPO wealth event. The catch: employees who leave for a competitor within **18 months** reportedly forfeit their options — **including vested ones**. On exercise or liquidity events, Blue Origin reportedly repurchases the shares immediately, so the plan functions as a contingent, cash-settled incentive rather than lasting share ownership — and Florida employees are not excluded from the forfeiture clause (as some West Coast employees reportedly are, under state non-compete laws). The full labor-market implications are this month's **Spotlight**.

Hiring & expansion

- **Extant Aerospace breaks ground on a \$75M Melbourne plant — 200 new jobs.** The aerospace-electronics maker is building a **376,000-sq-ft** facility at Melbourne's Harbour Logistics Center and says it will add **~200 positions** on top of a current **~250** — nearly doubling its local headcount. It's the strongest pure local-jobs announcement of the period, and a reminder that the region's growth story extends beyond the household names. (Extant is not in the 23-company Index sample; its openings are not in the **~1,547**.)

- **SpaceX's Starship complex nears first Florida flight.** Pad 39A's Starship tower is reported "months from operational" — water-deluge testing underway — while the **Gigabay** integration building at Roberts Road is structurally complete and a second pad rises at SLC-37. SpaceX has signaled a first Florida Starship launch attempt late this year; the buildout underpins the construction-and-operations tier of Cape hiring.
- **Embraer posts its best second quarter in 16 years.** The company delivered **45 executive jets in Q2** — the models final-assembled at its Melbourne campus — and is guiding to 160–170 for the year, implying a heavy second-half production push. That forecast is visible in the Index: Embraer's 35 Melbourne openings are majority skilled trades, with multiple second-shift and weekend postings (see Spotlight).
- *Continuing from June:* Blue Origin's \$600M "Project Horizon" upper-stage facility (~500 announced jobs) and Lockheed's Titusville missile plant (~300) remain in build-out; Lockheed's new \$850M award (see Contracts) strengthens the Titusville pipeline.

Launch cadence

The Cape logged 6 orbital launches in June — all SpaceX Falcon 9 — **and 4 more through July 17**, including the **last Atlas V flight supporting Amazon's Leo constellation** (July 2) — the final flight of the heavy 551 configuration; ULA's six remaining Atlas V rockets are reserved for Boeing Starliner missions as the fleet gives way to Vulcan. That puts the Eastern Range at **~47 orbital launches year-to-date** — our first published YTD count — versus a record **109** in 2025. Prorated, 2026 is running roughly **20% behind last year's record pace**: New Glenn has been grounded since late May, ULA's manifest is thin, and SpaceX has shifted more Starlink flights to California. Cadence watch for the rest of 2026: New Glenn's return to flight (targeted by year-end), the Roman Space Telescope on Falcon Heavy (no earlier than late August), Crew-13 (September), and ULA's first Dream Chaser launch (Q4). Launch tempo is generally associated with demand for integration, ground-systems, mission-operations, and trades roles — the kind of work concentrated in the contractor tier of the Openings Index — though this report does not measure that relationship directly.

Layoff / WARN watch

No Space Coast aerospace or defense layoff (WARN) notices were filed this period — the second consecutive clean month. As of this writing, Florida's WARN portal shows no new notices for any Brevard employer since spring; the state's most recent filing of any kind is dated April 17. (Earlier 2026 Brevard A&D losses — the Bechtel workforce reduction tied to NASA's halt of the Mobile Launcher 2 project, and L3Harris's January cost-program cuts — predate this report's coverage and did not recur this period.)

Three watch items, none of them layoffs today: the **KSC ground-systems (COMET) option decision** expected around the end of September (the likeliest explanation for the contractor-tier posting lull); **Boeing's Starliner-1** timeline, still unsettled as the flight converts to an uncrewed cargo test; and **Blue Origin's post-anomaly posture**, which so far points to reinforcement, not retrenchment.

Monthly Spotlight

THIS MONTH: The Technician Crunch — and the New Money Chasing It

Each issue features one rotating deep-dive on a topic that shapes local A&D hiring. This month: the skilled-trades tier — assembly technicians, avionics techs, and A&P mechanics — where Space Coast demand is broadest and the compensation story just changed.⁶

Ask five Space Coast production managers what they can't hire, and you'll hear the same answers: certified **A&P mechanics**, experienced **assembly and avionics technicians**, **aircraft painters**, **welders**. The engineering shortage gets the headlines; the trades shortage fills the second shift.

The demand, in this month's numbers. The technician pattern runs through the whole Index sample:

- **Embraer (Melbourne)** is the clearest case: **more than half of its 35 open roles are skilled trades** — A&P technicians, assembly techs across seats/avionics/flight controls/interiors, aircraft painters, upholstery technicians — with multiple **second-shift and weekend-shift** postings, the classic signature of a production ramp (the company just posted its best Q2 deliveries in 16 years and needs a big second half to hit guidance).
- **Blue Origin (Merritt Island)** shows ~60 technician-keyword postings among its 534 tracked openings, plus ~62 in manufacturing — New Glenn rate production is as much a trades story as an engineering one.
- **SpaceX (Cape Canaveral)** wants welders, launch-pad technicians, electricians, and thermal-hardware/heat-shield technicians — roughly 15 of its ~53 tracked openings.
- **Amentum (KSC/Eastern Range)** remains ~40% trades even in a reduced posting month — the mechanics and electronic technicians who keep the spaceport running.

What the trades actually pay here. The official benchmarks (BLS, May 2025, local metro averages): **aircraft mechanics & service technicians \$71,960** (~\$34.60/hr equivalent), **aerospace engineering & operations technicians \$91,030** (~\$43.80/hr), **machinists \$57,500** (~\$27.60/hr). At the posting level, entry assembly and production roles across Brevard typically advertise in the **\$16–25/hr** band (a small July sample of employer-posted and estimated ranges on public job boards — indicative, not a statistic), with experienced and specialized technicians well above it. The spread between entry assembly postings and the credentialed-technician benchmarks above runs to tens of thousands of dollars a year. Credentials — an FAA A&P certificate, an NDT certification, a weld cert — are a large part of that gap, but they travel together with experience, shift, employer, and duties, so read the spread as a market pattern, not a per-credential price tag.

The "comp war" question — what we can and can't verify. A claim that reached us from a senior industry source held that Blue Origin pays ~\$15/hour more than other local employers for basic assembly work. We tried to verify it, and this is what the record supports: Blue Origin does not publish pay for its Florida postings (Florida has no pay-transparency law), so there is **no employer-posted figure to check**. Self-reported aggregates put Blue Origin technician pay at roughly **\$26–36/hr** — against the \$16–25/hr band typical of posted entry-level assembly work locally. Read at face value, that is a premium **on the order of \$5–10/hr**, not

\$15 — and we caution that the Blue Origin figures rest on small self-reported samples, not posted ranges. Our conclusion: **Blue Origin very likely pays above the local trades market, but the widely repeated \$15 figure is not supportable on public evidence**, and we won't print it as fact.

Where the war is actually being fought: stock incentives. The verifiable escalation this month wasn't wages — it was stock. SpaceX's June IPO turned years of employee equity into tradable shares, creating thousands of paper millionaires nationwide (a national estimate, subject to lockups; the local share is unpublished — SpaceX employs thousands at the Cape and KSC). Blue Origin's response, reported by Fortune on July 16, was a sweetened stock-option package for employees — with an unusually sharp retention hook: leave for a competitor within 18 months and you reportedly forfeit **all** options, vested included. Some West Coast employees are reportedly shielded by state non-compete laws; **Florida employees are not**. For the local market, the implications cut two ways:

- *For technicians and engineers:* total compensation at the two space giants now includes a serious stock-based component — but the two differ in kind. SpaceX shares are publicly tradable (after lockups); Blue Origin's options are reportedly repurchased by the company as they pay out — closer to a valuation-linked cash bonus than to ownership — and carry strings that make leaving expensive. A candidate weighing offers should price the forfeiture clause, not just the grant.
- *For every other employer* — the primes, the suppliers, the contractors — the bar for competing on total compensation just rose. Employers who can't offer stock upside will need to compete on the things the giants can't easily match: schedule stability, overtime predictability, certification sponsorship, and speed of hire. In our recruiting experience, time-to-offer is the most underused competitive weapon in this market.

The pipeline problem — and the local answer. The structural issue behind the technician crunch is the credential pipeline: an A&P certificate typically requires FAA-certified training and 18–30 months, and experienced aerospace assemblers aren't produced by any local program at the rate the ramp demands. The regional assets — Eastern Florida State College's aerospace and advanced-manufacturing programs and the specialty schools around the airports — feed the market, but every production manager we talk to is competing for the same graduating classes. Employers winning this tier are the ones sponsoring certifications for promising entry-level hires rather than bidding for the finished article.

What it means if you're hiring or job-hunting here:

- *Job seekers (trades):* if you hold an A&P, weld certs, NDT, or verifiable aerospace assembly experience, you are in the strongest seller's market on the Space Coast — and second-shift/ weekend openings (Embraer has several right now) are often the fastest door in. If you don't hold a credential, target employers that sponsor them.
- *Hiring managers:* benchmark against the real market, not the rumor mill — the posted entry band is \$16–25/hr, the self-reported big-space premium is single-digit dollars per hour, and the stock-incentive war is real but fightable on speed, stability, and certification investment. Budget for counteroffers: your best technicians are now someone else's recruiting target.

National Context: U.S. vs. the Space Coast

The Space Coast is a small slice of a very large national industry. Setting the local market against the national backdrop suggests what makes Brevard distinctive: it pays A&D occupations well above the local wage base, it sits in the path of federal defense spending, and it is adding capacity.⁷

U.S. aerospace & defense supports **approximately 2.1 million jobs** (about **930,000 direct**) and generated **\$988.6 billion in sales** in 2025, contributing **\$500 billion in economic value** (1.6% of U.S. GDP) and paying **\$266 billion** in labor income — an average wage **above \$127,000, roughly 40% higher than the national average** (AIA 2026 Facts & Figures, released this month with 2025 data). Direct manufacturing employment splits almost evenly between commercial aerospace (51%) and defense/national security (49%). On the federal demand side, Congress enacted **\$839 billion** in FY2026 Department of Defense appropriations, and the procurement emphasis on **missiles and space** aligns with visible Brevard strengths — a point underlined this month by the Trident and Golden Dome awards landing in Titusville and Palm Bay.

The national trend line

U.S. aerospace manufacturing employment is climbing

All employees, aerospace product & parts mfg. (NAICS 3364), seasonally adjusted, monthly.
Full official series, BLS CES — April & May 2026 preliminary.



The national industry is hiring, not just holding: U.S. aerospace manufacturing employment reached a preliminary **587,700 in May 2026**, up about **24,100 jobs (+4.3%) over 12 months** and up roughly **100,000 since early 2022** (BLS). This issue's chart upgrades June's partial series to the **full 13-month official history** — the national backdrop is one of steady, sustained growth. The Space Coast's tracked-posting growth this month came against that tailwind — a directional pairing only, since postings (month over month) and payroll employment (year over year) are different measures. For broader context: the overall U.S. labor market added a modest 57,000 jobs in June (unemployment 4.2%), with manufacturing roughly flat — aerospace is an outperformer within a cooling national economy.

The benchmark snapshot

Metric	National (U.S.)	Space Coast	Takeaway
Aerospace mfg. employment trend	+4.3% year over year	Index +9.5% month over month*	Local postings rising alongside a growing national industry
Aerospace engineer pay (avg)	\$142,060	\$134,950	Near national par; ~2× the local average wage
Aerospace technician pay (avg)	\$91,310	\$91,030	At national par; above the local wage base
Avg A&D wage (national)	\$127,000+	Above the \$67,210 local all-occupation mean	A&D pay sits above the local wage base
Federal demand backdrop	~\$839B FY26 DoD approps	\$850M Trident + ~\$955M Golden Dome this month	Missile/space budget priorities landing locally

**Different measures — national is employment (year over year); local is tracked job postings (month over month). Directional comparison only.*

Bottom line: the region pays national-scale A&D salaries against a local wage base of about \$67,000; its missile-and-space work sits squarely in current federal budget priorities, with two major new awards this month; and the national industry it belongs to is growing at its fastest sustained clip in years. Taken together, these read as favorable conditions for recruiting and relocation — an interpretation we keep testing against the monthly data.

Get the Report Every Month

This report is published monthly by **Intrepidus Talent Solutions**, a specialist aerospace and defense staffing firm serving Florida's Space Coast. We place the engineers, technicians, and cleared professionals the region's top employers depend on.

Subscribe free to receive each monthly issue — and reach out any time for hiring support or a confidential talent-market consultation at **intrepidus-ts.com**.

Appendix & Methodology

How this report stays fresh

Most foundational data — employment, wages, total industry size — changes slowly. To stay current without manufacturing false movement, the report is built in two layers on a hybrid schedule:

- **Fresh layer** — the Openings Index, contract awards and pipeline, news roundup, launch cadence, and the rotating Spotlight. These change every issue and lead the report.
- **Backbone layer** — employment, wages, and national benchmarks. These anchor credibility and are refreshed when official data is released, not forced monthly.

A light **monthly pulse** runs every month; a deeper **quarterly flagship** (BLS-anchored) lands in September, December, March, and June.

Methodology & sources

- **Openings Index** — a **defined-sample** metric: open roles counted from a fixed list of **23 named Space Coast A&D employers** (anchors, suppliers, and base/range contractors), pulled from each company's **official careers site** across all Brevard County locations on a fixed date (July 17, 2026), then **cross-checked against Indeed** to catch missed locations. The same list is used every month so the trend is comparable; it is reviewed quarterly. The Index is **not** a census of all county-wide A&D openings — NASA and Space Force civil-service/military roles, third-party staffing listings, and employers not on the list are excluded by design. Share figures (e.g., the top-five ~89%) describe the tracked sample, not the whole market.
- **Wages** — BLS Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2025 (latest release), Palm Bay–Melbourne–Titusville metro and national, shown as annual mean (average) wages on a like-for-like basis; county weekly-wage trend from BLS County Employment and Wages (QCEW), Q4 2025.
- **Contracts** — USASpending.gov prime awards filtered to **Brevard County place of performance** (census figure from the June 2026 pull, refreshed quarterly); award headlines from official company and Department of Defense/Space Force announcements publicized June 5 – July 17, 2026, plus two late-May items not covered in the June issue (the Blue Origin NSSL task order and the New Glenn anomaly). Where an announcement postdates the underlying award — Lockheed's April Trident modification, publicized July 10 — we say so. Award values are total (multi-year) obligations, not single-year local spend. A Brevard place of performance establishes local relevance but does not by itself prove incremental local hiring.
- **Layoff / WARN watch** — official Florida Department of Commerce WARN filings, checked July 17, 2026.
- **National context** — AIA 2026 Facts & Figures (2025 data); U.S. DoD FY2026 appropriations; BLS national OEWS and Current Employment Statistics (series CES3133640001, data.bls.gov); BLS Employment Situation, June 2026 (released July 2, 2026, bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm).

- **Reproducibility** — direct links for this issue's key claims appear in the footnotes. Job postings churn daily, so Index counts are snapshots that may not be reproducible after the pull date; the underlying per-company count sheet (counts, site facets, and pull notes) is retained for every issue and is available on request via intrepidus-ts.com.
- **Evidence standard** — role counts, wages, WARN filings, and federal award values are reported as observed data from public sources. Connections between awards, solicitations, and hiring are treated as directional indicators unless individual postings can be tied directly to a specific program. Where a figure is our own count (the Openings Index) or an estimate, it is labeled as such.

Section notes & sources (footnotes)

¹ **The Monthly Pulse.** Second issue on live data; first with (provisional) month-over-month change. Figures are drawn from public sources (company career sites, USASpending.gov, BLS, Florida WARN filings, company and government announcements); where a number is our own count — chiefly the Openings Index — or an estimate, it is labeled. The "~" prefix marks estimates (SpaceX, Collins Aerospace, Amentum, Northrop's site-basis note) explained in footnote 2.

² **Openings Index — scope & method.** The Index is a sample, not a census: open roles counted from a fixed, named list of 23 Space Coast A&D employers, pulled from each company's official careers site, filtered to all Brevard County locations (Melbourne, Palm Bay, Malabar, Titusville, Cape Canaveral, Merritt Island, Rockledge, Cocoa, Cocoa Beach, Patrick SFB, Kennedy Space Center, Satellite Beach), on a single fixed date (July 17, 2026) — held constant so the month-to-month change is real and comparable. It excludes smaller firms not on the list, third-party staffing listings, and NASA/Space Force civil-service and military postings (we count their commercial contractors instead). Multi-location postings where the Space Coast is one of several sites are included as posted (Blue Origin, Northrop, and Lockheed totals run slightly high for this reason, as in June). **July-specific notes:** SpaceX (~53) and Collins Aerospace (~27) are cross-checked estimates — both companies' sites blocked automated reading at pull time, so counts were assembled from official postings surfaced via job boards and verified individually; treat their month-over-month changes as approximate. Northrop's figure uses its careers site's default Melbourne view (which includes some remote-eligible reqs; an on-site-only count would be ~406). Lockheed's site newly lists Kennedy Space Center as a separate location (25 roles, included; June's grouping may have differed, so Lockheed's change is approximate). Amentum's count (~37) carries wider uncertainty — several contractor sites became unreadable to automated tools this month; the sharp decline is corroborated by multiple independent sources, but the exact level is ± 5 . The role-mix chart covers the five employers publishing usable category data this month (L3Harris's per-site categories were unavailable at pull time and rotate out until they return; Blue Origin's are keyword counts, which can overlap). The company list is reviewed quarterly; this quarter's review (September issue) will act on Space Perspective (now confirmed defunct), Rocket Lab and Terran Orbital (no Florida site), and Beyond Gravity (U.S. operations in Alabama).

³ **Contracts & the Demand Signal.** Anchor-program table and the 2,525 active-record census: USASpending.gov, prime contract awards with Brevard County, FL place of performance, FY2026, as pulled for the June issue (refreshed quarterly; KSC awards appear under the "Orlando, FL 32899" ZIP but are physically performed at KSC in Brevard). Anchor-table values are obligations on individual prime-award records — not program totals, ceilings, or potential values; large programs span multiple records. Award

headlines: Lockheed Martin news release, July 10, 2026 (news.lockheedmartin.com — the release states the Department of War announced the \$850M Trident II D5LE2 modification in April 2026); L3Harris news release, July 13, 2026 (l3harris.com/newsroom), award value as reported by Reuters (~\$955M); U.S. Space Systems Command release, May 28, 2026 (ssc.spaceforce.mil — NSSL Phase 3 Lane 1 task order, NTO-4); L3Harris/MDA HALO award coverage, July 6–7, 2026 (\$499.6M). The connection from award to local job postings is a reasonable interpretation, not something this issue measures directly.

⁴ What the Market Pays. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS, May 2025, Palm Bay–Melbourne–Titusville, FL metropolitan area and national; annual mean wages, like-for-like. OEWS is annual; the May 2026 estimates are expected in spring 2027, so this section's benchmarks are the current official figures. County weekly wage: BLS County Employment and Wages news release for Florida, Q4 2025 (Brevard County: average weekly wage \$1,416, +6.7% over the year; employment ~245,400). Hourly equivalents shown in the Spotlight divide annual mean wages by 2,080 hours.

⁵ This Month on the Space Coast. Sources: SpaceX IPO — CNBC (June 3 and June 15, 2026, cnbc.com), NPR (June 12, 2026, npr.org: valued above \$2 trillion on debut); the ~4,400 employee-millionaire figure is a national estimate repeated across IPO coverage, not a company disclosure. New Glenn anomaly and return to flight — Spaceflight Now (May 29, June 3, and June 30, 2026, spaceflightnow.com); SpacePolicyOnline (May 28, 2026: static-fire test ahead of a planned 48-satellite Amazon Leo launch; no payload aboard); U.S. Space Systems Command statement (May 28, 2026). Blue Origin stock-option package — Fortune (July 16, 2026, fortune.com); details labeled "reportedly" are Fortune's reporting, not company statements. Extant Aerospace — Connect CRE (July 15, 2026), Space Coast Daily (July 2026). Starship Florida — NASASpaceflight (July 3, 2026). Embraer deliveries — company release and trade coverage (July 7, 2026). Launch cadence — Spaceflight Now launch coverage and schedule (spaceflightnow.com; Atlas V 551 final flight, July 2, 2026: six Atlas V remain, reserved for Starliner); 2025 total per Space Launch Delta 45; YTD 2026 count compiled from per-launch records (orbital launches from Cape Canaveral SFS/KSC only; pace comparison is our own proration). WARN — Florida Department of Commerce WARN portal, checked July 17, 2026.

⁶ Monthly Spotlight. Demand figures: this month's Openings Index pull (Embraer role list from its official careers portal; Blue Origin/SpaceX/Amentum role mixes as described in footnote 2). Wages: BLS OEWS May 2025 local metro (annual means; hourly equivalents at 2,080 hours); posting-level entry-assembly band (\$16–25/hr) from employer-posted and estimated ranges on public job boards, July 2026. Blue Origin technician pay: self-reported aggregates on Indeed (flagged low-confidence by the platform) and Glassdoor (five submissions), clearly labeled as such — Blue Origin publishes no Florida pay ranges; the "~\$15/hr premium" claim could not be verified and is reported as unverified. Stock-incentive developments: Fortune (July 16, 2026, fortune.com — including the mandatory-repurchase and forfeiture terms) and SpaceX IPO coverage cited in footnote 5. A&P certification timeline: FAA certification requirements (Part 147 training or documented practical experience). Program references (Eastern Florida State College) are descriptive, not an endorsement.

⁷ National Context. Sources: Aerospace Industries Association, 2026 Facts & Figures (2025 data; released July 2026, aia-aerospace.org); U.S. DoD FY2026 appropriations (P.L. 119-75); BLS OEWS May 2025 (national and local); BLS Current Employment Statistics series CES3133640001 (all employees, aerospace product & parts manufacturing, seasonally adjusted), full monthly series May 2025 – May 2026 extracted from

data.bls.gov July 17, 2026 — April and May 2026 preliminary; BLS Employment Situation, June 2026 (released July 2, 2026): total nonfarm +57,000, unemployment 4.2%, manufacturing +3,000. National and local wage figures are both annual mean (average) wages on a like-for-like basis.

The tracked company universe (23)

Anchor: Blue Origin, Northrop Grumman, L3Harris, Lockheed Martin, SpaceX, Leonardo DRS, Embraer, Collins Aerospace (RTX), Amazon Leo (formerly Project Kuiper), Boeing. **Suppliers/specialists:** Redwire, Sierra Space, Custom Aerospace, Space Coast Composite, Space Perspective, Beyond Gravity, Rocket Lab, Terran Orbital. **Base/range contractors:** Amentum, Jacobs, KBR, Leidos, Bechtel. *(Under quarterly review — decisions due with the September issue: Space Perspective — confirmed defunct; Rocket Lab and Terran Orbital — no Brevard site; Beyond Gravity — U.S. operations now in Alabama.)*

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