

CLM Workforce Connection Uses Data to Target Industries, Collaborate with Regional Stakeholders

Focus, Collaborate, Create: Steps to Effective Workforce Development

Recently, CLM Workforce Connection, Ocala Economic Development Council and Central Florida Community College—all located in Ocala, Florida—teamed up to initiate a shared, focused industry strategy for their region. In order to target the right industries and high growth, high wage occupations, they used integrated regional data and local knowledge to focus their resources on important local industries, and formed a direct line of communication with key local employers in those industries. As a direct result, they have now launched their targeted industry committees and have begun to attract and focus grant funding in critical workforce areas. One such example is the new Manufacturing Maintenance Technician Program to prepare skilled workers for local in-demand jobs, where the impending retirement of many seasoned maintenance workers in the manufacturing and distribution industries has created a projected workforce gap.

Shared Vision of Regional Development in Ocala, Florida

Shared Location Boosts Collaboration

On a typical day at CLM Workforce, inter-organizational collaboration and data-driven decision making take place simultaneously. “We communicate at least once a week informally with the EDC and CFCC and conduct formal team meetings monthly,” says Kathleen Woodring, Chief Operations Officer of CLM Workforce. This is partly due to the shared location of CLM Workforce Connection (www.clmworkforce.com) and Ocala Economic Development Council (www.ocalaedc.org) offices on the campus of Central Florida Community College (www.cf.edu), forming a uniquely organic partnership. With this kind of constant dialogue, these three stakeholders speak the same language and have the same vision to see their community succeed. For these partners, collaboration has become an expected part of everyday life. Close quarters and similar goals of economic growth and workforce development has led to innovation across organizational lines.

Targeting Key Industries with Data-Driven Methods

To help accomplish these goals, CLM Workforce has used Economic Modeling Specialists’ (EMSI’s) **Strategic Advantage** to identify the region’s key high-growth, high-wage industries in need of a skilled workforce. According to Woodring, the real strength of EMSI’s tool for this project was that it allowed them to “spend time analyzing the data rather than just hunting it down, which allowed more time for strategizing with key stakeholders on implementation.”

Fast Follow-Through Implements Much Needed Program

Once CLM Workforce, Ocala EDC and CFCC came up with their road map of focus industries, they had a sound, data-driven infrastructure for their collaboration. The partners targeted the manufacturing and distribution sector since the data showed a growing demand for workers there. Soon after this industry-focused strategy was created, CFCC took the lead on addressing the shortage of skilled maintenance technicians. They applied for a unique consortium Incumbent Worker Training Grant and CLM Workforce Connection piggy-backed on that multi-day training by funding a day-long training focused on programmable logic and motion controls used in fork lifts. Local grant dollars were used for that extended training.

Since then, CLM Workforce Connection has partnered with CFCC and the EDC to conduct an advanced Maintenance Technician Training for four employers that included 15 participants. The partnership also landed a \$330,000 state grant that is targeted at manufacturing and healthcare with additional funds to attract new career seekers into high growth manufacturing positions such as Maintenance Technician. The creation of this targeted manufacturing training program was a natural result of the focused emphasis on the manufacturing industry and the strong relationships built with the industry's top employers. Because there was a history of strong public support from CLM Workforce, Ocala EDC and CFCC, the employers felt comfortable approaching these organizations with their workforce needs.

This recently launched program is a prime example of how focused data application coupled with organic collaboration among key stakeholders can lead to regional success and the effective and simple creation of a seamless solution.

About EMSI

Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI) is a professional services firm that offers integrated regional data, web-based analysis tools, data-driven reports, and custom consulting services. EMSI has served thousands of workforce, education, economic development, and other policy professionals in the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom, and the company's web-based **Strategic Advantage** research and analysis suite is used by over 2,500 professionals across the U.S. For more information, call (866) 999-3674 or visit www.economicmodeling.com.