Workforce Learning Summit Innovation or Best Practice

Lenoir Community College

**Spirit AeroSystems Customized Training Project**

A unique partnership was formed to make sure this project was successful for the state of North Carolina. All partners were represented at the beginning of the project, from the Governor’s Office, the Department of Commerce, the North Carolina Community College System, the Division of Workforce Solutions, Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, the Lenoir County JobLink Center, and the local Economic Development Office. Once the announcement was made, the North Carolina Community College System Customized Training Program, Lenoir Community College, Spirit AeroSystems Kinston, Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, Lenoir County JobLink Center, and the Division of Workforce Solutions met weekly to make sure this project stayed on track. Continued partner meetings lead to continuous improvement and best practices.

**DETAILS**

Eastern NC will provide Spirit AeroSystems with a workforce that has the technical ability, work ethic, flexibility and intellectual capacity required for all necessary skill sets. We did not view this as a problem; we viewed this as an opportunity. We believed we had an existing workforce with the skills needed for Spirit AeroSystems’ job classifications, either through those currently employed in similar occupations, or through those who are employed in compatible positions and can be easily retrained to meet the job requirements of Spirit AeroSystems.

Best practices consisted of a unique partnership that was formed including the North Carolina Community College System Customized Training Program, the Lenoir Community College Customized Training Program, Spirit AeroSystems Kinston, the Eastern Carolina Workforce Board, the Lenoir County JobLink Center, and the Division of Workforce Solutions. These partners met weekly to make sure this project stayed on track. Continued partner meetings led to continuous improvement and best practices. A website portal established a process for the recruitment, screening, assessment and training of potential candidates. The final screening was through the Division of Workforce Solutions. Classes were scheduled by Lenoir Community College.

Company involvement with the Lenoir Community College Aerospace instructors and community college curriculum writers allowed the college to build a curriculum (Aerospace Manufacturing Readiness) based on the needs of Spirit AeroSystems. A morning and evening class allowed unemployed persons and those seeking career changes to attend classes. A continuing education class was developed to allow candidates without prior manufacturing experience to also train for potential employment. A two year curriculum program in Aerostructure Manufacturing and Repair Technology with diploma and certificate programs was developed for advanced training. Applicants that completed the Aerospace Manufacturing Readiness Program could receive up to eleven credits toward the two year degree program.

Lenoir Community College and Spirit AeroSystems partnered to offer a job fair for potential candidates. In addition, Lenoir Community College and Spirit AeroSystems collaborated with East
Carolina University to help with aerospace related software training. Instructors traveled to the Spirit AeroSystems’ Wichita, Kansas plant for additional training. The College utilized the 359 Capacity Training Funds for advanced composite needs required for Spirit AeroSystems training.

Implementation of the Customized Training project began in September 2009. (The project is still in progress.)

**Partner Type(s):**
- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development Board/One-stop
- University
- Other: Governor’s Office, Division of Workforce Solutions, NC Global TransPark Authority

**Impact/Outcomes**
The training provided a local workforce with the tools needed to work at Spirit AeroSystems. Companies trust in our training capabilities. A new innovative training class was developed that will streamline the point of entry for candidates from 20 weeks to nine weeks, speeding the entry process and the learning curve. The AMR classes have provided Spirit AeroSystems with 145 hourly production workers, which represent 40% of their current headcount.

**Funding Source(s)**
The North Carolina Community College Customized Training Program expended $2,647,375 from Spring 2008 through the end of June 2014. The current project end date is June 30, 2015.

**REFLECTIONS**

**Innovation or Best Practice**
A unique partnership between the Governor’s Office, local economic team, the North Carolina Community College System, the Division of Workforce Solutions, Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, the Lenoir County JobLink Center, and Spirit AeroSystems was involved in quarterly update meetings to make sure the project was on track for success. The training team consisting of the Lenoir Community College Workforce Development Director, the Regional Director of the Customized Training Program, and the Spirit AeroSystems Human Resource Department still meet bi-weekly for continuous improvement opportunities.

**Lessons Learned**
- Renovation of new classroom spaces
- Issues and challenges such as sharing electricity, phone/Internet service, staffing, and office space
- The need for maintenance contracts on machinery as well as upgrades and licensing fees for software programs
- Materials used for qualification and re-certification training should be furnished by the company, not the college training funds
- With a start up plant, work with the OEM vendors to make sure training is provided. (If not, an OEM training budget needs to be created.)
- Working with foreign OEM companies is different and should be negotiated early in the project.
- Pre-hire training does not allow you to be as company/customer specific as post-hire training due to confidentiality agreements between company customers. (We worked with Spirit AeroSystems trainers and Spirit AeroSystems Human Resources to modify our existing class from pre-hire to
post-hire which will allow successful candidates to be hired and in place from a lead time of twenty weeks to nine weeks. All of these best practices are now implemented in the project.)

**Scalability**
The strategy is simple:
- Make sure all partners are represented at all meetings for continuous communication flow.
- Make decisions jointly.
- Make sure the training team and the company have direct lines of communication.
- Make sure key players are involved throughout the process.

**RESOURCES**

**Workforce Learning Summit Presenters**
Bobby Merritt, Director of Workforce Development, Lenoir Community College

**Video Links**
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1xzKQUzDO0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1xzKQUzDO0)
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXdY779qe2s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXdY779qe2s)

**For Further Information**
Bobby Merritt, Director of Workforce Development
Email: bmerritt@lenoircc.edu
Phone: 252.233.6845