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Florida MEP Helps JetAir Melt Barriers to FAA Contracts

MEP Helps Company Secure Training Grants to Implement New Plasma Spray Process

Miami, FL - Many companies, even small ones like JetAir Support, Inc. (JetAir) a Miami based firm that repairs and overhaul jet engine components employing 21 people, often sub-contracts out work to other companies.

While this is a common practice, for an FAA Certified Repair Station like JetAir, the loss of control over production time and quality can be an issue. A job the company was sub-contracting was re-coating jet engine components with metal through a plasma spray process. Farming out the work was costing them tens of thousands of dollars a year and placed a dangerous strain on their bottom line.

When the company found the necessary equipment to bring the plasma work in-house, they jumped at the chance, but they also realized there would be significant training costs involved in equipping employees with the necessary skills, so they called in the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership for assistance. (Florida MEP) JetAir had worked with the Florida MEP in the past to help them achieve ISO certification, a designation illustrating the highest level of quality and international standards in manufacturing, so they had confidence in the organization's expertise.

"JetAir had to send its employees through special FAA approved training to become certified in the plasma spray process," said Wilhelm Barb, Florida MEP project manager. "This type of high level training can be cost prohibitive for a company their size, so we helped them secure a training grant to offset the costs and enable them to bring the process in-house. This helped them control quality and product turnaround time and control costs."

Through the grant, the Florida MEP also assisted JetAir in developing the plasma spray process and train employees on set-up and production of plasma coated components, allowing the company to lower manufacturing times and create more job capacity.

What was once a sub-contracted task has become a profit center for the company and JetAir is even sub-contracting plasma spray jobs for other manufacturers. The in-house plasma spray process has lead to \$100,000 in increased sales, creation of two new jobs and a \$70,000 reduction in outsourcing costs.

"The Florida MEP was able to provide not only the technical expertise but also assistance in securing a grant to underwrite a portion of the training costs," said Adelino Martins, president of JetAir Support Inc. "This new plasma coating capability has allowed us to decrease our costs and at the same time we have acquired new customers. Without the Florida MEP's assistance we surely would have had to lay employees off or close down."

The Florida MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information on the Florida MEP program call 321-939-4000.

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