

Florida MEP Director Showcases Training Program at White House Jobs Summit

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Florida MEP) today had an opportunity to showcase one of its most successful job training initiatives at President Barack Obama’s White House Forum on Jobs and Economic Growth. Florida MEP Executive Director Rod Rodrigue was invited to attend the high profile White House event.

Rodrigue used the opportunity to present Florida MEP’s Mobile Outreach Skills Training (M.O.S.T.) program, which trains unemployed workers for existing manufacturing jobs using a state-of-the-art mobile training unit.

Today’s White House jobs summit is intended to provide an opportunity for the President and his team to hear from some of the nation’s leading CEOs, small business owners, labor leaders, thinkers and nonprofits about ideas for continuing to grow the economy and put Americans back to work. The Florida MEP Executive Director was one of approximately 130 individuals invited to participate in the summit.

“I am deeply honored to be able to attend today’s White House jobs summit. The President’s economic team is looking for strategies to increase employment and spur the nation’s economic recovery. We have a terrific story to tell. Even in the midst of recession, Florida MEP has been able to train unemployed workers for careers in manufacturing and connect those workers with companies looking to hire people for hard-to-fill positions. I’m delighted that the White House recognized our efforts and gave us an opportunity to discuss our mobile training program,” Rodrigue said.

The M.O.S.T. program is a fast-track training initiative of Florida MEP that utilizes a mobile classroom. Outfitted with cutting-edge computer-numeric controlled (CNC) equipment, the mobile unit delivers an intensive skills training program that consists of practical skills, theory and hands-on curriculum utilizing computer-based 3-D simulations and training modules. Participants who successfully complete the program not only gain job training, but receive interviews with employers ready to hire qualified applicants. The Florida MEP’s effort to identify employers with job openings and connect those employers with the trainees differentiates the program from many other training programs and contributes to the M.O.S.T. program’s high level of successful job placements.

Two additional features of the program have contributed to its success. First, the M.O.S.T. program trains workers for entry-level jobs that have a career ladder, higher earning potential and opportunities for advancement. Second, Florida MEP’s role doesn’t end when trainees graduate from the program. MEP project managers continue to work with employers months after the end of the training program to ensure that trainees have mastered the required skills.

This follow-on feature of the program reflects MEP’s mission of training employees so that their improved skills drive company growth.

“One of the unique features of the M.O.S.T. program is the opportunity it creates for trainees to embark on a career in manufacturing. The program qualifies trainees for entry-level

manufacturing jobs as computer-numeric control operators, but these CNC positions are not dead-end jobs. In Florida and many other parts of the country there is a real shortage of trained CNC operators. We identify manufacturers with job openings before the training begins, so that individuals who complete the training program have a good chance of successfully competing for these jobs. We believe in giving individuals more than job skills; we want to train them for a career in the high-tech future of American manufacturing,” the Florida MEP executive director stated.

In conjunction with the Jobs Summit, the Florida MEP mobile training unit traveled to Washington, D.C., and received permission to set up on Capitol Hill so that members of Congress and congressional aides could tour the unit. Florida MEP trainers spent yesterday giving guided tours to congressional visitors, explaining how the high-tech mobile classroom operates and trains workers.

“With Florida’s unemployment rate at 11.2 percent, we must be diligent in developing innovative programs to ensure displaced Floridians are trained and able to reenter the labor force. The M.O.S.T. program accomplishes this by partnering with workforce boards and local employers to identify available opportunities for existing jobs that need to be filled. It delivers the full continuum of services needed for long-term success – recruitment, assessment, training and job placement,” Rodrigue explained. “This program is a win-win situation for everyone involved and has an immediate impact on Florida’s economy. If initiated nationwide, the program could have an even more substantial impact and contribute to the resurgence in American manufacturing.”

The Florida M.O.S.T. program has been supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. For more information on Florida MEP and the M.O.S.T. program, visit www.floridamep.org.