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FloridaMakes Enhances Apprenticeship Program with Florida Ready to Work
First statewide organization to add soft skills training requirement in its apprenticeship program

Orlando, FL — FloridaMakes has announced a new strategic partnership with Florida Ready to Work, a research-based career readiness program created by Florida law. As a part of this partnership, FloridaMakes will become the first statewide organization to add Florida Ready to Work’s essential soft skills training to their required apprenticeship curriculum.

“Apprenticeship programs are integral to FloridaMakes’ mission of improving the performance of Florida’s manufacturing sector, because they help manufacturers find and develop needed talent,” said **Kevin Carr, FloridaMakes CEO**.

“However, most apprenticeship programs focus on the hard skills that are needed to effectively operate within a manufacturing environment. That’s why we’re excited to partner with Florida Ready to Work, adding their soft skills training to our apprenticeship program curricula, which will provide apprentices with the necessary foundational skills to build successful careers.”

FloridaMakes recognizes that the lack of essential employability skills is a barrier to job and economic growth in the state. In 2020, the Florida Chamber of Commerce surveyed businesses and found that more than 80% of Florida business leaders emphasized the importance of employability skills. These skills, which include communication, critical thinking and problem solving, are universally valuable work competencies that are essential to adapting to shifting demands within and between careers.

“Manufacturing is one of our state’s major industries and is offering endless career pathways for Floridians,” said **Colleen Englert, Florida Ready to Work executive director**. “We applaud FloridaMakes for their forward-thinking vision and are proud to help them maximize their apprenticeship programs and meet employers’ demands. By utilizing the state of Florida’s free online career readiness training and credentialing solution, manufacturing apprentices will not only walk away with the technical skills needed for a productive career in manufacturing, but the essential soft skills and foundational employability skills needed to succeed and advance.”

As a part of the strategic partnership, FloridaMakes will utilize Florida Ready to Work's career readiness and essential soft skills training in all apprenticeship Related Technical Instruction (RTI) curricula beginning this summer. FloridaMakes apprentices will have the opportunity to sharpen their skills and earn the Florida Soft Skills Credential. Through the training provided by Florida Ready to Work, apprentices will learn and enhance their ability to communicate effectively, convey professionalism, promote teamwork and collaboration, and think critically and solve problems.

"It is critical that individuals who choose a career in manufacturing are not only dependable, but also possess strong communication skills and the ability to flourish in a team environment," said **Abe Alangadan, FloridaMakes board member and senior project portfolio manager for Johnson & Johnson Vision**, based in Jacksonville, Florida. "Not being proficient in any one of these areas can contribute to major mishaps on a manufacturing line, causing unfortunate cost and time delays, with potential safety implications. This is why prioritizing these essential soft skills in apprenticeship programs is important, and I'm happy that FloridaMakes is focused on these areas in their partnership with the state-sponsored Florida Ready to Work program."

Florida is home to more than 22,000 manufacturing companies and accounts for 4.95% of Florida's Gross State Product. Establishing and maintaining a strong workforce is key to growing this important industry and continuing to diversify Florida's economy.

The partnership between FloridaMakes and Florida Ready to Work is designed to raise awareness of the Florida Ready to Work program with Florida manufacturers while promoting FloridaMakes as a leader in providing quality educational opportunities for the future of Florida's manufacturing workforce.

About FloridaMakes

FloridaMakes is a statewide, industry-led, public-private partnership operated by an alliance of Florida's regional manufacturer associations and organizations that serve with manufacturers. FloridaMakes' sole mission is strengthening and advancing Florida's economy by improving the competitiveness, productivity and technological performance of its manufacturing sector, with an emphasis on small- and medium-sized firms. It accomplishes this by providing services focused on three principal value streams: technology adoption, talent development, and business growth. FloridaMakes is the representative of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network in the state of Florida, a program of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce. For more information, visit www.FloridaMakes.com.

About Florida Ready to Work

Florida Ready to Work is a research-based career readiness program created by Florida law. The program focuses on developing a work ready talent pipeline with the essential employability skills required for individual, business, and whole community economic well-being and growth. Program services are delivered in collaboration with the CareerSource Florida network, schools, state colleges, technical centers, adult education, juvenile justice, corrections, community-based organizations, and employers.

Florida Ready to Work is funded by the State of Florida and administered by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity in partnership with WIN Learning, a national career readiness solutions company. For more information, visit FloridaReadytoWork.com.

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