
AN ECONOMIC GARDENER

PORT ST LUCIE, FL—A ‘Master Gardener’ of sorts has joined Florida’s Research Coast Economic Development Coalition. A professional with years of experience working with economic development boards and chambers of commerce, Michael Corbit joins the organization as the Economic Gardening Project Coordinator.

“We expect Michael’s vast experience and strong relationships will help us exceed the goals of the grant,” the Chief Executive Officer of Workforce Solutions Gwenda Thompson said.

As the Executive Director of InternetCoast Economic Development Council for over four years, Corbit focused on promoting technology and life science assets of Southeast Florida. In this capacity, Corbit coordinated with the private sector, the education community and multiple government agencies at various levels. He also developed the annual Internet Coast Technology Show. Corbit most recently served as the Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Advance Processing & Imaging out of Deerfield Beach where he was primarily responsible for strategic business development.

The position of Economic Gardening Project Coordinator developed after Florida’s Research Coast Economic Development Coalition was awarded an Economic Gardening Grant of \$193,000 by Workforce Florida, Inc. The grant was submitted by Workforce Solutions, one of the Coalition partners. The grant allows the coalition partners to target companies with high-growth potential. These companies are referred to as ‘gazelles’, have 10-99 employees, and are at a point in their business cycle when the casual ad hoc methods of entrepreneurial ventures begin to fail.

Using grant funds, the Coalition will develop various programs that help gazelles succeed. Grant activities include the research and development of market intelligence in targeted industry sectors, marketing of training programs, workshops, the identification of supply chains and exporting opportunities, creation of a regional business information website and training of 150 workers in targeted industries. The project’s targeted industries are healthcare, biotechnology and energy including alternative energies, but many other businesses will benefit from the grant activities.

Primary Coalition partners with Workforce Solutions in this project include the Business Development Board of Martin County, the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County, the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce, and Okeechobee Main Street. Other business and educational entities will be recruited as project partners. These entities include Indian River State College, Florida Atlantic University and the Chambers of Commerce in Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St Lucie County.

Workforce Solutions is a private, non-profit, Florida corporation with a Board of Directors consisting of private business, economic development and education representatives, community and state agencies, and elected officials. Members of the Board represent the diversity of businesses, organizations and trades that operate in the Treasure Coast Region, including Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie County. Chartered by the State of Florida to create and manage a workforce development service delivery system responsive to the needs of businesses and jobseekers, Workforce Solutions offers award-winning programs and partnerships recognized locally, statewide, and nationally. Our staff members are certified workforce professionals often recognized by their peers as leaders in workforce development.

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