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## **Training grants pay off for Manatee County manufacturers**

*Bradenton, FL* – Thirty-six employees at three Manatee County manufacturing businesses are working smarter after the companies used federal training grants coordinated by the Economic Development Council, Manatee Chamber of Commerce (EDC); Suncoast Workforce Board; and Manatee Community College (MCC).

“Eaton Corp. and Radiant Power Corp. needed similar training, so they teamed up to make the training program more efficient,” according to Nancy Engel, workforce/business retention manager at the EDC. “RF Supply Inc. conducted one of the largest training efforts that have been funded by the grants to date.”

Eaton and Radiant joined forces to train 22 employees in leadership and teamwork skills. By the employers creating a larger group to train, the federal grant was able to cover the full cost, rather than requiring the usual 50 percent match by the employer. The Suncoast Workforce Board helped the companies with the grant paperwork and brought in MCC to provide training at the Lakewood Ranch campus.

“In this economic environment, manufacturers need their production line team leaders and supervisors to take on more of a leadership and team-building role, to reduce the requirement for management oversight and make the work more efficient,” said Chuck Schofield, senior vice president for Radiant Power, which designs and manufactures electrical and lighting applications for the aviation industry. Radiant needed to train new employees hired to support the company’s launch of a new product – a backup power supply for digital flight recorders in aircraft. Radiant’s plant operations manager contacted Eaton’s human resource manager, Linda Taylor, with whom he had worked at another company.

““We are always looking to deliver additional high-quality leadership and teamwork training to our line leaders and supervisors,” Taylor said. “We appreciate being able to tap into these federal training grants to augment Eaton’s ongoing leadership development activities for our employees. The timing of the courses was perfect.”

Meantime, RF Supply Inc. sent 14 employees through a rigorous, four-part training program provided by Jose Hernandez of Hernandez Electrical Contractors and Jason Mozo of Florida Lift Systems. The training, for which the grant and the employer each paid half, covered industrial skills and forklift operation.

“We recently added almost \$250,000 worth of new equipment to expand our product lines into tempered and insulated glass,” said Diane Hoelle, vice president at RF Supply, which fabricates glass and mirror products. “We are gearing up to roll out new products for the hurricane season and have added 14 employees this year. We needed to train both existing and new employees to operate safely in the factory environment.”

All of the employers said they would use the grant process again because the Suncoast Workforce Board, EDC and MCC made the process painless. The next grant cycle begins July 1. For more information about grant opportunities, contact the EDC at (941) 748-4842, ext. 127, or Runa Badal at the Suncoast Workforce Board at (941) 358-4200, ext. 3139.

### **About the EDC**

The Economic Development Council, a division of the Manatee Chamber of Commerce, is the sole organization responsible for developing and implementing programs designed to attract new value-added businesses and to assist in the retention and growth of targeted existing businesses in Manatee County. Information: [www.ManateeEDC.com](http://www.ManateeEDC.com).

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