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Climbing the Government Contract Ladder

ePATHUSA, an Iowa software consulting and staff augmentation firm, has achieved remarkable success as a federal contractor, securing the 2023 National Small Woman-Owned Business of the Year award from the National 8(a) Association and HUBZone Contractors National Council. They are now well positioned to pursue contracts with the Department of Defense.

Graduating from their first state contract in 2009, the transition to federal contracts has not been easy. ePATHUSA's success resulted from experience, a focused vision for growth, and the support of the CIRAS APEX Accelerator program, which helps companies navigate the complex world of government contracting.

"We have worked for many years in state and local government and with commercial businesses and have built our capabilities to pursue bigger contracts with the federal government," said Hari Nallure, who cofounded ePATHUSA with his wife, Anitha. "Our vision is to scale up from 400 to 500 employees. We need to secure federal business to meet our vision."

ePATHUSA

FOUNDED: 2005

EMPLOYEES: 50

OVERVIEW: Provides software solutions and staff augmentation services for local, state, and federal agencies, as well as commercial businesses.

IMPACT: More than \$6.8 million in government contracts since 2015.

Continued on page 2



Anitha Timri G, ePATHUSA President and CEO; Hari Nallure, ePATHUSA Vice President and Cofounder



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Since 1963, we have delivered proven services to enhance the performance of industry. Our approach—Engage. Educate. Embed.—creates specific solutions that allow each business and its community to prosper and grow.

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 - Iowa Grain Quality Initiative
 - Meat Science Extension
 - Polymer and Food Protection Consortium
 - Structural Engineering Research Laboratory
- Alliant Energy
- Community Colleges for Iowa
- Iowa Area Development Group
- Iowa Association of Business and Industry
- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa Farm Bureau
- Iowa Sustainable Business Forum
- Quad Cities Chamber

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With the assistance of CIRAS, ePATHUSA has received multiple contracts since 2015.

"Providing government contracting assistance aligns with our mission to help businesses prosper and grow," said Jodi Essex, CIRAS program director. "Adding the government as a customer helps diversify your customer base, which protects a business in case of unforeseen circumstances with an existing customer segment."

ePATHUSA has worked with CIRAS since 2015, starting with their successful application for the Small Business Administration (SBA) 8(A) program, which is a 9-year business development program to help small, disadvantaged businesses advance in federal contracting.

ePATHUSA's first contract was with the Iowa Department of Revenue. The company used the CIRAS bid match service to find other opportunities and was awarded projects with the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission and several other state governments, including Minnesota, Colorado, and Nevada.

Frequently, Iowa businesses approach CIRAS without a clear understanding of what specific agencies would be a fit with their products or services. With access to key databases and daily notifications of bid requests, CIRAS government contracting specialists provide clients with timely information about relevant contract opportunities; market research reports on government spending, including contract awardees and pricing; and relevant agency contacts. They help companies stay compliant with ever-changing government regulations and achieve small business certifications that government agencies are seeking when conducting procurements.

"Small business owners wear many hats and often don't have the bandwidth to decipher the government contracting process," Essex said. "We provide clients with a roadmap and an action plan that may include anything from identifying the right agency to target, to obtaining certifications, to complying with various government regulations."



ePATHUSA has earned CMMI Level 3 and ISO certifications.

“
We always go to CIRAS when we need help with research on contract opportunities.
”

“We always go to CIRAS when we need help with research on contract opportunities,” said Nallure. “We have learned a lot of things and we are now fully equipped with accounting and payroll systems to have larger contracts and be compliant with federal requirements.”

“ePATHUSA exemplifies the roadmap many companies take: establish a business, pursue certifications, gain experience at the state and local government level, and build up to federal contracts,” explains Essex.

ePATHUSA now has an SBA Mentor-Protégé agreement in place, which provides another layer of expertise for companies pursuing government contracts.

CIRAS is actively collaborating with ePATHUSA to develop a Department of Defense (DoD) Mentor-Protégé agreement and pinpoint potential areas where they could benefit from mentorship. These areas include acquiring security clearance and achieving cybersecurity compliance. This step holds significant importance since the DoD plays a pivotal role in federal contracts.

While receiving government contracts requires effort, it provides many benefits, Essex noted, especially since economic downturns often don't deter government spending and “there's almost nothing the government doesn't buy. We might work with a restaurant that caters to a government entity or a company that makes bulletproof vests for the military or a tiny component of a military vehicle.”

For more information, contact Jodi Essex at jodir@iastate.edu or 515-509-0769.

CIRAS Staff News

Hory Chikez joined CIRAS as a supply chain project manager.

Hory is the CIRAS lead for national supplier scouting and optimization services. He will build and maintain a supply chain optimization and intelligence network, lead the execution of projects to map, and understand supply chains and lead the execution of projects related to select local supply chain needs.

Hory comes to CIRAS after completing his Ph.D. in industrial and agricultural technology from Iowa State University. Prior to Iowa State, he served as an industrial engineer in the areas of textiles and automotive.

For more information, contact Hory Chikez at horych@iastate.edu or 515-357-7693.

Mica Paul joined CIRAS as an event manager.

Mica holds a bachelor's degree in event management from Iowa State University and a master's in strategic communication from the University of Iowa. Prior to joining CIRAS, Mica served as the executive assistant to the Vice President of ISU Extension and Outreach and the Vice President of County Services.

As event manager, Mica will oversee and coordinate the operational aspects of virtual events hosted by CIRAS.

For more information, contact Mica Paul at micapaul@iastate.edu or 515-509-5311.



ALMACO

FOUNDED: 1884 | EMPLOYEES: 180

OVERVIEW: Designs and builds equipment used in conducting seed research. ALMACO also provides manufacturing and engineering services for a variety of companies.

IMPACT: Enabled access to tools used to preserve their community's historical sites.

ALMACO Preserves Heritage with Advanced Technologies

Sometimes it takes the latest technology to restore some of the oldest things.

CIRAS recently partnered with ALMACO in Nevada to recreate ornate metalwork on Nevada's Briggs Terrace-Evergreen Lane house, which was built in 1879 and is on the National Historic Register. During the 2020 derecho, a tree fell into the front porch, damaging its cresting—decorative metal ornamentation that looks like tiny wrought iron fencing but is used along the tops of Victorian roofs. The matching cresting on the very top of the house was not damaged, so finding salvage to replace the cresting on the porch wasn't an option.

The Nevada Historical Society, which owns the house, connected with ALMACO for assistance. Founded in 1884 as a blacksmith shop, ALMACO is the oldest business in Story County. Today it creates custom planting and harvesting solutions for seed research as well as manufacturing and engineering services.

ALMACO was happy to help. "Our community gives us so much every

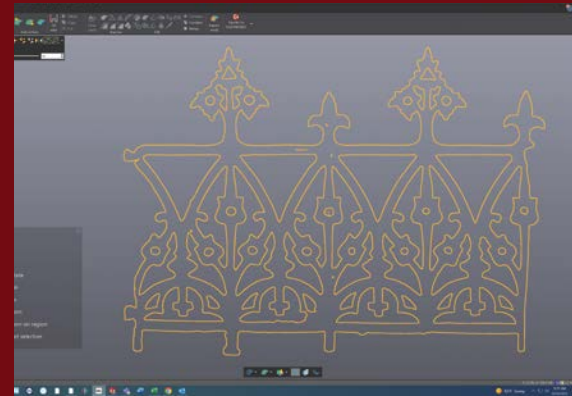
year. We're always looking for ways to give right back," said Mark Smith, chief execution officer.

A community member brought part of the cresting to ALMACO to determine if they could recreate it. Smith told them using the original method of casting iron was prohibitively expensive, but he was confident that CIRAS had the right technology to produce something similar at a fraction of the cost.

CIRAS was indeed able to help. Jake Behrens, CIRAS project manager, used a 3D laser scanner to create a digital model of the ornate ironwork. CIRAS then extracted information from the scan to create a 2D CAD drawing of the parts. After that, ALMACO used the digital file to program their computerized laser cutter to replicate the same outline from sheet steel.

The collaboration resulted in a cresting that has less detail on the front and back than the original, but with a fully accurate silhouette to create the desired effect.

Smith said it's not the first time ALMACO has worked with CIRAS. "When we have a problem that is more



The image above shows a sample sketch exported from one of the cast iron component's 3D scan data.

complex than what we normally deal with, we engage CIRAS. Even if we think we may know the answer, it gives us great confidence in the decisions we are making."

Smith, who donated materials and labor for the project, likes being able to use innovation to support community historical efforts.

For more information, contact Jake Behrens at jbehrens@iastate.edu or 515-815-5003.



Restored metalwork on Nevada's Briggs Terrace-Evergreen Lane house.

CIRAS MARKS 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

This year the Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) celebrates its 60th anniversary. The Board of Regents and Iowa legislature established CIRAS in 1963 to counsel industry on special problems, advise on appropriate procedures for growth, and conduct research and testing programs where necessary. In the last 10 years alone, CIRAS has had a cumulative impact of more than \$6.4 billion with more than 66,000 jobs added or retained as a result of the assistance companies have received from the center.

“We are proud of our legacy in helping Iowa industry, and we look forward to many more years of service,” said newly named CIRAS director Mike O’Donnell. “Industry leaders face a world of rapidly changing technologies, geopolitical shifts, and workforce challenges. We will continue to evolve and help with strategies to solve these complex problems.”

Early CIRAS programs provided technical aid in the areas of industrial administration, agricultural engineering, the dairy industry, and industrial education. That has been expanded to include wide-ranging services

in five important categories: growth, leadership, productivity, technology, and workforce.

O’Donnell listed several priorities for CIRAS over the next five years:

- (1) Simplify access to CIRAS experts and partners;
- (2) create cross-functional solutions that pair growth and technology;
- (3) increase engagement with students to enhance their experience and create a potential

talent pool for employers; and (4) expand emphasis on the future of industry.

“I encourage businesses to reach out to me or anyone on the CIRAS team to let us know how we can continue to make Iowa a great place for industry,” O’Donnell said.

While CIRAS has changed considerably over the years, the foundation remains: we listen to Iowa industry to understand issues facing companies, provide technical and managerial assistance to help solve those issues, and support you to ensure long-term success.



O’Donnell Is New CIRAS Director

Mike O’Donnell is the new director of CIRAS.

O’Donnell has been part of the CIRAS team since 2008.

For the past decade, he has led the CIRAS Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program, a private-public partnership focused on equipping

small and medium-sized manufacturers with the essential tools and resources for achieving success. O’Donnell also led efforts to establish the CIRAS Digital Manufacturing Lab powered by Alliant Energy, launch the Iowa Sustainable Business Forum, and expand CIRAS services in strategy and growth.

In his new role as director, O’Donnell will lead the overall strategic direction of CIRAS. He will focus on fostering relationships with industry partners, state and federal entities, faculty, and students.

“I’m honored to lead the CIRAS team,” said O’Donnell. “I look forward to working with our team and our partners in this role as we continue our mission to make Iowa a better place to live and work.”

Before joining CIRAS, O’Donnell held key positions in both the defense and small appliance industries, where he showcased his expertise in supply chain management, quality control, engineering, and program management. He has bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mechanical engineering from Bucknell University, and an MBA from Iowa State University.

O’Donnell’s appointment was effective June 16.





BUILDING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

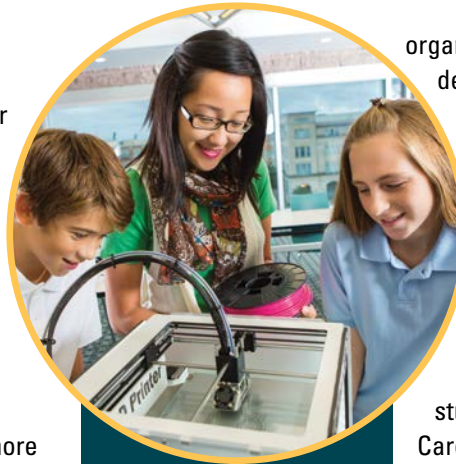
A key part of the workforce solution for Iowa businesses is building a pipeline of talent. Taking that first step can be overwhelming for small businesses.

“Companies recognize that engaging with high school students can help build a future workforce, but most lack a focused strategy on how to effectively reach younger people,” said Mayra Ramirez, CIRAS project manager. “Through our high school engagement services, we help companies build relationships and become more intentional with their overall student engagement.”

The services are modeled on existing efforts to engage college students with Iowa businesses. It includes similar elements like internships, mentoring opportunities, and project-focused tasks.

“We’ve had companies express an interest in working with schools, but they don’t know where to start, who to contact, or what to do,” said Ramirez. “There’s a lot more to it than setting up a table in the foyer outside the cafeteria and expecting students to flock to it. It needs to be more intentional than that.”

Ramirez facilitates introductions between manufacturers and school personnel. She also provides information on existing events that already draw students like Manufacturing Day, and she connects manufacturers with school clubs and



“There’s a lot more to (student engagement) than setting up a table in the foyer outside the cafeteria and expecting students to flock to it.”

organizations. More practical matters like developing job descriptions tailored to high school students, organizing tours of other facilities, and providing opportunities to make presentations to supervisors are also addressed.

“CIRAS has been a fantastic resource for us,” said Shelia Siler, human resources at Revere Plastics Systems, Ankeny. “Mayra provided demographic student data and identified local high school Career and Technical Education points of contact. She was even on-site for our first tour and information sessions with students from the Ankeny area high schools.”

There are key times when companies will ramp up their efforts to reach students, like just before the start of a new school year or new term. But Ramirez encourages companies interested in working with high school students to reach out to her at any time. Schools are also urged to contact her, especially those that offer Career Technical

Education (CTE) courses. Ramirez can help find companies with projects for their CTE students.

“We want to be a connector of resources and help our clients find solutions for their unique needs.”

For more information, contact Mayra Ramirez at ramirez@miaastate.edu or 515-520-3101.

CEDAR VALLEY INNOVATIONS

FOUNDED: 2004 | EMPLOYEES: 1

OVERVIEW: Collaborates with farmers to design site-specific planting configurations.

IMPACT: Maximizes profitability and improves soil and water quality.

Capstone Projects Help with Innovation

Bob Recker has a complicated business challenge and Iowa State capstone students are helping him solve it, bit by bit.

Recker owns Cedar Valley Innovation (CVI) in Waterloo, which works with farmers to create planting configurations for maximum profitability and optimal soil and water quality. He travels to fields in a specially outfitted trailer, which works like a mobile laboratory when he evaluates the site and presents options to clients.

His goal is to create a portable data modeling system that would download and analyze online information for the field, including topography, weather history, and soil properties. The data would create a computer model to show soil loss for the field, depending on different weather scenarios presented to the model. The model could then be adjusted to other various farming practices, such as reduced tillage, wider rows, cover crops, water flow patterns, and buffer strips.

Data could then be further used to generate a graphic map, presented in the trailer to clients. The map could be altered for the farmer to show “what if” scenarios if different farming practices were used, given various weather conditions.

Since 2014, Recker used 10 capstone projects, coordinated by CIRAS with students from the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. Unlike most capstone projects, the teams working with Recker to build on the work of the previous teams, moving CVI slowly but surely closer to its computer modeling goal.

“Many Iowa State engineering students must complete a capstone project spanning one or two semesters before graduation that demonstrates their ability to apply knowledge to a real-world problem, and CIRAS works with several dozen companies each year to connect capstone students with companies,” says CIRAS project manager Jake Behrens.

Recker said he enjoys mentoring up-and-coming professionals. They benefit, and his company does, too. “I’m able to bring new young talent in to solve a problem that I might not otherwise have the time or skills to solve.”

For more information, contact Jake Behrens at jbehrens@iastate.edu or 515-815-5003.



Waterloo business owner Bob Recker has used Iowa State students on ten capstone projects, each building on the work of the previous team.

Upcoming Events

Midwest Manufacturing & Networking: Find Your Competimates & Collaborate

October 17, 2023

Competimates are rival companies that team together to obtain new business. Attendees will explore the power of partnerships and discover potential competimates! The in-person event will consist of discussions and presentations from experts on timely topics but will focus on a structured networking session to pursue the goal of more manufacturers working together to pursue and win business.

ILC Annual Conference

October 26, 2023

The Iowa Lean Consortium Annual Conference will be held at the Meadows Event Center in Altoona, Iowa. This event brings continuous improvement professionals together to exchange insights, explore strategies, and advance practices. This event will be filled with keynote presentations and breakout sessions.

Meet the Buyers—Sioux City

November 15

Join us for an exclusive networking and relationship-building event designed for businesses interested in government contracting. Connect with state, local, and federal government agencies, prime contractors, and fellow businesses operating in the government contracting domain.



Visit www.ciras.iastate.edu/events-workshops for details on these and other events.

Bringing Marketing In House

Jennifer Eden stepped into the marketing role at Original Saw knowing one thing for certain: she needed some help.

Years spent as an elementary school teacher, stay-home mom, and a sort of “jack-of-all trades” at the company had prepared her for many things—but not for marketing.

“I didn’t have any marketing experience and neither did anyone else at the company,” said Jennifer. “We knew we needed a solid

plan to continue growing. We just didn’t know how to go about it. Fortunately, CIRAS was there to help us.”

Original Saw, maker of high-end saws and accessories, has worked with CIRAS since 1999 on projects ranging from product development to website design. Founded in 1990 in Britt by Robert Eden, it’s now run by Robert’s son, Allen. Today,

the company is considered an industry leader in American-made cutting equipment.

Until recently, Original Saw relied on outside providers to meet their marketing needs. The company brought its efforts in-house when Jennifer assumed full-time marketing responsibilities. That’s when Paul Gormley, CIRAS project manager, suggested a marketing bootcamp. Bootcamps provide a good dose of expert guidance along with a series of webinars that focus on many digital marketing disciplines.

“The purpose of the strategic marketing bootcamp is to help clients understand what they need to know to do marketing themselves or hire internal or external resources to get things done,” said Gormley.

Jennifer was working her way through the bootcamp series when COVID hit.

“We had a plan, but it wasn’t complete,” she said. Also, COVID forced some changes on us, the biggest being updating our website as quickly as possible so we could engage in e-commerce.”

“**We knew we needed a solid plan to continue growing. We just didn’t know how to go about it. Fortunately, CIRAS was there to help us.**”

CIRAS helped the company develop a stronger search engine optimization strategy to direct more traffic to their website. Since then, they’ve also helped Original Saw with e-commerce development, social media marketing, email campaigns, and customer relationship management. Most recently, CIRAS has connected the company with a virtual chief marketing officer, an experienced marketing professional who provides Jennifer with ongoing support and direction as she continues to navigate her marketing responsibilities.

“We’re a small company,” Jennifer said. “The marketing team is just me. Without CIRAS, I wouldn’t have gotten this far. I can do only so much online research before frustration hits. Having a resource and expert to go to has saved an immense amount of time. It’s made me more confident in my decision-making and it’s resulted in a stronger marketing plan for our company.”

For more information, contact Paul Gormley at gormley@iastate.edu or 319-721-5357.

Jennifer Eden turned to CIRAS for help with e-commerce strategies and other tools to market the company owned and operated by her husband, Allen.

ORIGINAL SAW

FOUNDED: 1990

EMPLOYEES: 21

OVERVIEW:

Manufactures industrial-grade cutting equipment for the woodworking industry.

IMPACT: Strengthened in-house digital marketing activities and led to cost savings.



Kentucky Lean Tour Worth the Wait

After multiple pandemic-related delays, several members of the CIRAS Iowa Lean Consortium (ILC) finally made it to Kentucky, and by all accounts the trip was worth the wait.

“It was a very well-rounded experience with classroom training, tours, and social and networking time,” said Ryan Swartz, vice president of operations at Civco Medical Solutions. “I’ve been to multiple Lean training events throughout my career, but this was the first primarily focused on culture and mindset. It’s inspired me to deepen a culture of problem-solving throughout our entire organization.”

“By traveling to Kentucky, the nexus of Lean manufacturing in the U.S., we were able to offer tours of local manufacturing plants, including Toyota,” said Tracy Schuster, CIRAS program director. “These ‘Gemba walks’ allowed participants to visit production floors and see people applying Lean practices to their work. It hits home in a way that imagining it from an off-site conference room just can’t do.”

For Kevin Young, continuous improvement manager at Allsteel, the tours offered a sense of what could be done back in Iowa.

“A big takeaway for me was the training center set-up through the community college that mirrored what the students would see in the Toyota facility,” he said. “If the curriculum at the community colleges here aligned with our applications in the plant, it would shorten the training learning curve tremendously.”

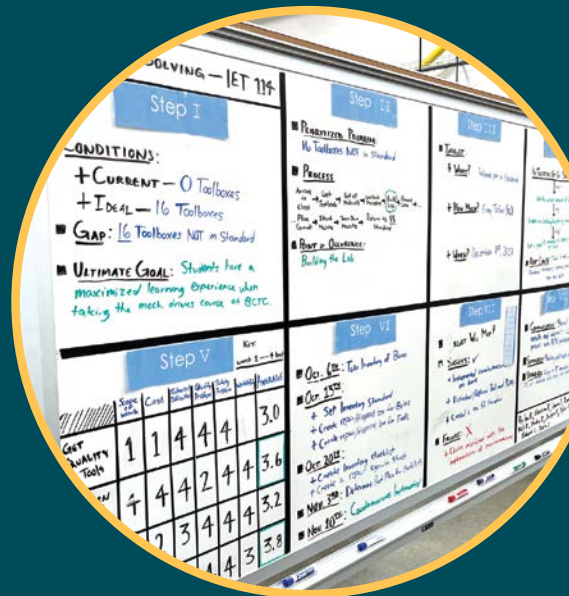
The Kentucky tour took place in early May. Twenty-nine people from 13 companies attended. They spent more than 16 hours in leadership workshop sessions led by Mike Hoseus, executive director of the Center for Quality People and Organizations and a nationally recognized leader in Lean practices and philosophy. The chance to tap Hoseus’ experience and leverage his connections with local manufacturers is one reason Phil Jones, general manager at Rada Manufacturing, sent a team of four to the event.

“It was a great learning experience, and a quick glance at the evaluations show a deep appreciation for Mike’s presentation,” said Emily Betz, CIRAS project manager. “One big takeaway was a reminder that every employee is a problem solver. Many participants said they’d forgotten that. Now they’re going to start asking questions differently to reinforce the idea that people at all levels of the organization can solve problems.”

According to Schuster, a reminder to incorporate emphasizing Lean methodologies and Lean thinking with the onboarding of new employees was another big takeaway for attendees who plan to work with their HR departments to improve the onboarding process.

Planning for the May 2024 tour is underway. Schuster and Betz envision a similar format of workshop sessions and site visits with the addition of more networking opportunities for this member-only event.

For information, contact Tracy Schuster at tschust@iastate.edu or 515-715-0164



Tours and leadership workshop sessions were the featured activities of the recent Kentucky Lean Tour. The event drew 29 people from 13 Iowa companies.

Becoming Even More Competitive

Kirkland “Bubba” Davidson, owner of Des Moines-based Dirty 30 Trucking & Excavating, built his company from the ground up relying mostly on his own skills and research. He was successful in securing independent contracts as well as subcontracting jobs, both of which enabled him to grow his company to its current workforce of nine employees.

But taking his business to the next level meant becoming certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE). The DBE initiative supports women-and minority-owned businesses as they compete for federally funded transportation contracts. Mary Zimmerman, CIRAS DBE support services manager, identified where Davidson needed assistance and utilized the resources at CIRAS to get him the assistance he needed to leverage the certification.

Based on Zimmerman’s advice, Bubba attended Securing and Performing Work with a Prime Contractor: Do’s and Don’ts, a CIRAS workshop. “The event was designed to be interactive to help participants build relationships but also learn what they needed to know about competing for these projects. A panel of contractors discussed the bid process from their perspective and area of expertise, and then they fielded questions from the other participants. Bubba indicated to me later that this was instrumental in his success on some of the projects he later acquired,” Zimmerman said.

Dirty 30 is a family-owned, full-service company that provides solutions for earth-moving projects like general excavation, land clearing, trenching, site grading, and concrete, dirt, and snow removal. In addition to the workshop, Davidson has turned to Zimmerman for information on additional educational opportunities and training that would expand his bidding capabilities.

“CIRAS provides great insight on various information related to government procurement,” Davidson said. “I look forward to working with them again in the future.”

For more information, contact Mary Zimmerman at maryz@iastate.edu or 515-450-1278.



Kirkland “Bubba” Davidson credits DBE certification with helping him better compete for subcontracting work.

Fall Career Fair Dates

Agriculture and Life Sciences Career Day

■ **October 10, 2023**

9 a.m.–2 p.m.

<https://www.career.cals.iastate.edu/cals-career-day>

Business, Industry, and Technology Career Fair

■ **September 20, 2023**

Noon to 5 p.m.

<https://www.ivybusiness.iastate.edu/event/fall-business-industry-and-technology-career-fair/>

Engineering Career Fair

■ **September 13, 2023**

Noon to 5 p.m.

■ **September 19, 2023**

Noon to 5 p.m.

<https://www.engineering.iastate.edu/ecs/employers/career-fair/>

People to People Career Fair

■ **September 26, 2023**

10 a.m.–2 p.m.

<https://hs.iastate.edu/current-students/careers-and-internships/career-fairs/people-to-people-career-fair/>

Tips for Employers

- ✓ **Make sure your positions are posted in CyHire before attending the career fair.**
- ✓ **Increase name recognition by hosting an info session.**
- ✓ **Engage with all students at the career fair to help promote your company.**

For more, contact Mayra Ramirez at ramirezm@iastate.edu or 515-520-3101.

Businesses Connect at Matchmaking Events

Companies use CIRAS matchmaking events to help secure government contracting work, connect with subcontractors, and meet potential suppliers.

“Getting in front of a large manufacturer can be difficult for smaller companies, and sifting through thousands of company profiles for a subcontractor can be daunting for original equipment manufacturers,” said Melissa Burant, CIRAS project manager. “Our supplier matchmaking events help break down barriers so large manufacturers can meet their small business subcontracting goals and smaller ones can get in on some of these government jobs. It’s just one way CIRAS is creating real solutions across the supply chain.”

CIRAS has hosted seven matchmaking events in the last five years, drawing 270 attendees. The process begins with a company profile that’s completed prior to each event. Profiles allow participants to decide who they want to meet even before the event starts.

“We ask everybody, ‘What are you good at? What are your capabilities? What does another company need to know about you so they can decide whether to set up a meeting?’ It’s about making a connection and starting the conversation; and that’s what we

facilitate through these matchmaking events,” said Burant.

Burant also provides pre-event coaching to help both large manufacturers and smaller suppliers present themselves in ways that will pique the interest of potential collaborators.

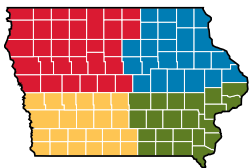
Participation in a supplier matchmaking event doesn’t guarantee a connection will be made, but it is a good first step.

“You have to show up and speak up—and you have to do it repeatedly because what you’re building is familiarity and trust; you’re working on building that relationship, and that takes time,” said Burant. “But without a matchmaking event, it could take even more time.”

**For more information, contact
Melissa Burant at mmburant@iastate.edu
or 563-726-9958.**



CIRAS CONTACT INFORMATION



Locate your county to find your best introduction to CIRAS.
Your strategic advisor can help connect you with the expertise you need for your business.



All staff information can be found at
www.ciras.iastate.edu/staff-directory.

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515-231-8691

FOOD INDUSTRY
Rachel Hahn
rhahn@iastate.edu
515-620-8093

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Recruiting More Women into Manufacturing

Women make up nearly half of the working population, but they remain underrepresented in manufacturing. According to recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women account for more than 57% of the overall workforce but only about 29% of the manufacturing workforce, a statistic that's been largely unchanged for years. Addressing this gender disparity can benefit manufacturers in several ways, including improved innovation, creativity, and profitability, while addressing workforce shortage issues.

But attracting female employees may require changes to the way companies traditionally recruit and train workers. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Start early**—Change young girls' perceptions of manufacturing careers by showing what working in manufacturing is really like. Provide plant tours to students. Participate in school career day events. Partner with schools on STEM projects that are fun, interactive, and meaningful.
- **Be inclusive**—Give examples of women in all kinds of positions including leadership roles in all company materials like job announcements, workplace posters, brochures, websites, and promotional materials.
- **Offer internships**—Offer a hands-on experience to help female students get first-hand experience in manufacturing settings.
- **Get their attention**—Create job descriptions that do more than list duties and responsibilities. Find a unique aspect of the work and use that to get the attention of applicants. For example, a company that makes medical equipment could emphasize its role in improving or saving lives.
- **Create connections**—Set up an onboarding system that supports new employees by matching them with someone who does a similar job. Check monthly to see how onboarding is progressing.

Anything you can do to attract a larger number of potential workers will increase the number of female applicants. For example, if your company offers a climate-controlled environment, make sure to emphasize that. Also consider the benefits you offer and how those might appeal to workers. Studies show that flexible schedules and childcare assistance are important to female applicants. If you are able to offer that, make it clear in your advertising and promotional materials.

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