

## Mackenzie McNabb

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions  
(803) 952-8179, [mackenzie.mcnabb@srs.gov](mailto:mackenzie.mcnabb@srs.gov)

# SRNS Recognized for Outstanding Continuous Improvement and Operational Excellence Initiatives

**AIKEN, S.C.** – (December 20, 2023) – At the [South Carolina Manufacturing Conference and Expo](#), Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) was awarded the Transformational and Operational Excellence Award for record-breaking achievements in continuous improvement (CI) initiatives and operational excellence tools that generated over \$42 million in cost-savings during fiscal year (FY) 2023.

“This was a record year for SRNS and continuous improvement,” said Perjetta “PK” Hightower, Director of Interface Management and Continuous Improvement. “SRNS engaged nearly 17% of its workforce with over 180 CI initiatives, achieving over \$42 million in savings — \$22 million of which was hard-dollar savings to be used to increase work scope.”

The seventh annual event by the South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership ([SCMEP](#)), brought over 200 companies from across the Southeast to the Greenville Convention Center. SCMEP is a nonprofit that connects manufacturing companies across South Carolina to benchmark best practices, training, Lean Six Sigma tools and CI initiatives. The Six Sigma methodologies identify opportunities for improvement within organizations by eliminating waste and increasing standardization.



*The SRNS Continuous Improvement Team accepts the Transformational and Operational Excellence Award from Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, on behalf of the governor and the state of SC, during the South Carolina Manufacturing Conference and Expo. From left to right; Blake Leaphart, Cynthia Boler-Melton, Tamia Smalls, Dawn Haygood, Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, Barbara Smoak, P.K. Hightower and Lisa Steed.*

“The continuous improvement team has partnered with SCMEP for nearly 15 years, so it is incredibly exciting to take home this award and to be one of the top manufacturing companies with over 500 employees,” said Lisa Steed, SRNS CI Lean Six Sigma Specialist. “We will continue to transform both

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general employment activities and more specialized site-wide processes to be more efficient, cost-effective and customer-driven.”

The SRNS core CI team is comprised of certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belts and reinforced by divisional continuous improvement experts. SRS transformed many of its day-to-day operations by implementing the nationally recognized IDEAS™ (Individuals Developing Effective Alternative Solutions™) Program for employee suggestions. In FY23, over 250 implemented ideas have streamlined various work processes and generated over \$4.9 million in savings, an increase of over \$1 million from the previous fiscal year.

“The final return on investment for the IDEAS Program for FY23 was \$88.63, meaning that for every dollar spent on the IDEAS Program, the return was \$88.63 back to the company,” said Blake Leaphart, SRNS CI Lean Six Sigma Specialist.

“These results are experienced by all — from the workers on the frontline to the senior management who report gains and savings to the Department of Energy,” Leaphart said. “We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment.”

In addition to the IDEAS program, SRNS utilizes operational excellence to ensure the functional success of its CI programs and to identify areas of improvement. Operational excellence tools include causal analysis, corrective action program, self-assessment program, performance analysis, independent evaluation board and the SRNS scorecard.

“SRNS CI initiatives and operational excellence tools have played a huge role in Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility and the National Nuclear Security Administration capital projects and will continue to ensure the Site’s processes are prepared to meet national security requirements,” continued Hightower. “We will continue to strategically transform business and operation management systems to keep pace with changing needs; facilitating renewal of the workforce, missions and infrastructure at SRS to provide increasing value for the nation and community.

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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