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South Carolina Companies Learn from Award Winning SRS Employee Suggestion Program

AIKEN, S.C., April 20, 2021 – The Savannah River Site (SRS) employee suggestion program was created in 1952 and has generated \$250 million in savings, including approximately \$1 million per year for the past two years. It is reportedly the longest, continuous-running suggestion program in the United States having won over 50 national and international awards.

Recently, Senior Lean Six Sigma Specialist for Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Blake Leaphart described the history of the program, now known as “IDEAS,” and explained the reasons for its continual success. His comprehensive presentation was delivered via teleconference to members of OpExChange, a peer-to-peer network of companies in South Carolina dedicated to learning and growing together. Member companies host events and share practical examples of industrial automation, lean manufacturing improvements and leadership development.

“This was one of our most impressive and highly valued presentations. Thirty-six participants representing a wide variety of business and industry from across South Carolina provided positive feedback and expressed sincere appreciation for the information and guidance from Blake,” said Mike Demos, Coordinator, OpExChange.

He emphasized that a robust employee suggestion system is a phenomenal tool to collect the undiscovered intelligence of the workforce and turn this into results that not only benefit the organization but also increase employee morale.

According to Leaphart, all types of suggestions (such as those related to safety, security, process and productivity improvements, cost savings and avoidances, and procedure efficiencies) are eligible to ensure that SRS maximizes savings for the Department of Energy (DOE) and demonstrates good stewardship of taxpayers’ money.

“This will allow other companies in the region to understand the value of an employee suggestion program,” said P.K. Hightower,



Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Blake Leaphart recently made a presentation to a South Carolina-wide audience emphasizing that a robust employee suggestion system is a phenomenal tool benefiting the organization, increasing employee morale.

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Manager, SRNS Continuous Improvement & Director, Interface Management. “Our employees know first-hand how to improve their processes; however, they do not always have a chance to have their IDEAS evaluated for implementation. This program provides the vehicle for employees to continuously look for ways to cost effectively improve their processes without compromising safety and security. It’s a win-win for employees and the company, employees become vested owners of their future at SRNS and continuously look for ways to improve and build on those improvements.”

The OpExChange is comprised of 125 companies of various sizes, complexities and industries. Regardless of the company composition, an underlying ambition for each is how to effectively harness the collective ideas and untapped knowledge of each workforce.

SRNS is presently the largest employer within the OpExChange program with approximately 6,500 employees.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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