
Aerospace

ABOUT

South Carolina Aerospace is a partnership between the South Carolina Council on Competitiveness and the South Carolina Department of Commerce to develop the aerospace industry cluster in the state. The partnership's efforts are facilitated by **Deborah Cameron, Director of Aerospace Initiatives, and Wayne Fritz, Senior Project Manager**. For more information and to get involved, please contact Deborah at dcameron@sccompetes.org.

HISTORY

In 2012, South Carolina's Secretary of Commerce Robert M. Hitt, III appointed the Aerospace Task Force to develop a strategic plan to grow the state's aerospace cluster. With input from Regional Advisory Councils and led by Charlie Ferrell, the group of public and private leaders recommended priorities for action.

In late 2013, SC Council on Competitiveness received an Investing in Manufacturing Community Partnerships grant from the United States Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration. The Council worked closely with the SC Department of Commerce and other partners around the state to compete for these funds that enabled additional planning related activities to occur to support the aerospace cluster.

Using the Community Partnerships federal grant, Deborah Cameron was hired as the Director of Aerospace Initiatives and Wayne Fritz was hired as Senior Project Manager. Charlie Ferrell remained an adviser to the effort. Cameron and Fritz traveled the state for over six months and visited over fourteen organizations related to the aerospace cluster. They worked closely with South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership to help companies earn quality certifications and become aerospace suppliers. Regional and local economic development alliances were also engaged in outreach to companies in their respective locations.

SC Council on Competitiveness partnered with **USC's McNair Center for Aerospace Innovation and Research** and the **South Carolina Aviation Association** to host the state's first-ever Aerospace Industry Day event and to commission an economic impact study of the aerospace cluster in South Carolina.

400 people registered for the inaugural Aerospace Industry day in August 2014, and 30 exhibitors showcased aerospace-related companies. The day created excitement and momentum among industry leaders to continue active dialogue and collaboration in the cluster. Next year's industry day will be expanded to two days and provide even more exhibitor space.

The economic impact study's findings clearly show that South Carolina does indeed have an aerospace industry cluster and that there are opportunities to strengthen and grow the cluster. With continued, targeted efforts by the SC Council on Competitiveness and the SC Department of Commerce, will be positioned to compete nationally and globally as a destination for the aerospace industry.

CLUSTER FACTS

South Carolina's aerospace cluster consists of over 400 civilian companies, as well as four major military aviation facilities:

- Joint Base Charleston (Charleston Air Force Base), Charleston
- Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort
- McEntire Joint National Guard Base, Eastover
- Shaw Air Force Base, Sumter

While The Boeing Company is the dominant face of aerospace in the state, there are numerous other recognizable firms located in South Carolina. These include Lockheed Martin Corporation, TIGHITCO, Stevens Aviation, West Star Aviation and Ranger Aerospace. Yet, most companies in the aerospace cluster report having five or fewer employees. These small businesses comprise 95% of aerospace firm growth over the five-year period from 2007 - 2012.

There are over 53,000 workers directly employed by civilian aerospace companies and military aviation facilities in South Carolina. The average compensation rate of a civilian aerospace employee is about \$71,000 - far greater than the state average compensation of about \$41,000.