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Town of Bluffton Conducts Nationwide Search for
CEO of the Don Ryan Center For Innovation

The Town of Bluffton is accepting applications for the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI), the town's non-profit economic development organization. Following the resignation of the Center's former CEO, David Nelems, Town Manager Marc Orlando appointed Trent Williamson February 12 as interim CEO during this nationwide talent search. Williamson has served as the Vice President of Economic Development for DRCI for about a year.

Matt Green, the chairman of DRCI's board of directors, said the Center has reached major milestones during the last five years.

"The Center has greatly expanded its services as it has worked with numerous companies, created a mentoring program, encouraged young innovators through school programs such as its annual Tech Fest and created partnerships with local colleges and the Beaufort County School District," Green said.

Orlando said since opening the Center in 2012, its mission is to create a pro-business culture to attract knowledge-based businesses to the regional economy.

"The Don Ryan Center for Innovation has worked with more than 30 companies in the formal Incubator Program while advising an additional 140 companies,"

Orlando said. “DRCI graduates employ more than 100 people in Beaufort County and generate more than \$25 million in annual revenue and \$5 million in annual payroll.”

Orlando also said DRCI has celebrated recent economic development successes.

“Since the DRCI is a 501(c) (3), it has a greater range of flexibility than a municipality in terms of partnering and negotiating with businesses,” Orlando said. “In this role, DRCI has helped develop a public-private partnership with Southeastern Development Corporation in developing Buckwalter Commerce Park. The Town’s public infrastructure investment in the Commerce Park has, in turn, attracted other companies such as the new St. Joseph’s/Candler \$22 million, 40,000 square-foot medical center as well as the Technical College of the Lowcountry’s future Culinary Arts Institute.”

In addition to the new occupants named by Orlando, the DRCI will also move into a 3,000 square-foot building at Buckwalter Place Commerce Park, as a result of the Town’s public-private partnership. That move is expected in late 2019.

For more information about the position and how to apply, go to the Town’s website at <https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/pdfs/employment-opportunities/ceo-drci.pdf>.

About The Don Ryan Center for Innovation

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI) was established in 2012 with the mission of serving as a business incubator to grow Bluffton’s and the region’s economy by helping innovative start-up or early stage companies. The DRCI is also the official economic development organization for the Town of Bluffton. The DRCI focuses on helping start-ups thrive by incubating early-stage companies and providing education to entrepreneurs. Additionally, the organization focuses on economic development strategies such as business attraction, retention, and expansion and workforce development. Launching soon, the DRCI will also run the Business Concierge and Co-Working Space at Buckwalter Place to serve the Greater Bluffton Area business community.

About Trent Williamson:

Trent Williamson is the interim CEO of the Don Ryan Center of Innovation, effective February 12, 2018. Since April of 2017, he held the position of Vice President of Economic Development for DRCI. In this position, Williamson is responsible for business attraction, retention and expansion for the Town of Bluffton. He is also responsible for building partnerships with state and regional economic development organizations. Prior to DRCI, Williamson was the business development manager for the Cobb (County) Chamber of Commerce and a senior project manager for the Metro Atlanta Chamber. In these positions, he created economic development partnerships with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Tech, Georgia's University system and Georgia's utility providers and also developed community partnerships with 29 neighboring counties in the Atlanta-area.