

Small Business Development Center at UCF Morris and Associates, Inc.



(L-R) Larry Morris, Derek Hudson, Ellen Yarckin

Ellen Yarckin, CEO of a growing, small business in Lake County, Florida knows first-hand that success does not often go un-challenged. Ellen's company, Morris and Associates, Inc. is a Lake County, Florida woman-owned business specializing in cost effective infrastructure rehabilitation. Led by CEO Ellen Yarckin, the company provides cost effective, non-invasive solutions for repairing and cleaning leaky water and sewage systems. The company restores existing water system infrastructure elements to new, watertight, corrosion resistant conditions, and provides clean groundwater and thus helps to protect the environment.

With a client list is comprised of municipalities, government agencies and large commercial enterprises, Morris and Associates crews have completed projects in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Ellen became the majority owner of the company and took the helm in 2011 after deciding to follow her life-long passion of protecting the environment by helping ensure the availability of clean water for the community-at-large. Larry Morris, an expert in utilities and general construction founded the company in 2003.

"The SBDC is an amazing resource that we are very lucky to have in Central Florida. It is comprised of a group of successful people who have decided to give back to the community. It is worthwhile to check out this resource to get advice on all aspects of business. And best of all it is free!"

Ellen Yarckin,
Morris and Associates

Few companies in Morris and Associate's industry are owned by women. Once Ellen earned that government agencies sponsor Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE) programs that help woman entrepreneurs compete for contracting opportunities, she got to work submitting certification applications – quick and easy, right? Well, when Ellen submitted her first certification application to Orange County in Florida she was disappointed and disillusioned to learn that her certification application had been disapproved. So, she decided to appeal the decision and sought assistance from the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) at the University of Central Florida's Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

PTAC's Derek Hudson met with Ellen and assisted her in developing a strategy that would help guarantee certification approval. No stranger to government language and processes, Derek, a former Navy Supply Corps Officer and consultant on state of Florida projects totaling more than \$700 million, reviewed each of the areas of concern expressed by the municipality's certification review board and helped Ellen methodically address each concern in writing. He also coached her regarding how to present her case at an upcoming review board meeting at which she would actually make an appeal presentation to board members. Ellen walked in prepared, polished and with confidence and met unanimous board approval. Morris and Associates is now a certified Woman-Owned small business with several municipal governments as well a certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) with the state of Florida.

Almost immediately after receiving assistance from PTAC, Morris and Associates revenues increased by 15 %. Overall company growth for the year 2012 is more than 100%. Also, since following Derek's guidance, Ellen has applied for and received her DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise) certification with the Florida Department of Transportation and her SBA (Small Business Administration) WOSB (Woman Owned Small Business) certification with the federal government.

In a thank you letter, Ellen wrote:

"Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me to go over my WBE applications... You answered all of my questions and took all the time I needed with you...I appreciate all your help and guidance in contract negotiations ...Because of your help, I landed additional contracts."

"The SBDC is an amazing resource that we are very lucky to have in Central Florida. It is comprised of a group of successful people who have decided to give back to the community. It is worthwhile to check out this resource to get advice on all aspects of business. And best of all it is free!"

Helping Businesses Start, Grow and Succeed