

iCAMR CEO: ‘Florida Advanced Manufacturing Research Center will be a think tank for small and big businesses’

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[Matthew Richardson](#), Reporter- *Orlando Business Journal*

[Chester Kennedy](#) didn't pay attention when the initial rumblings began about Osceola County and the **University of Central Florida** wanting to create a high-tech, smart sensor facility. But that changed once the former **Lockheed Martin Corp.** executive noticed how it could greatly impact small businesses. "When they started talking about building a design center — a place where I can take my idea and have a product custom-built — now I'm interested," Kennedy said.

Kennedy, who was vice president and chief engineer for training and solutions at Lockheed Martin's Mission Systems & Training business in Orlando before he retired in July after 30 years with the defense company, said he did so because he wanted to do something different.

In October, he got his opportunity when he was headhunted by the International Consortium for Advanced Manufacturing Research to apply as its new CEO. Forty-five days later, he's the leading guy.

And while Kennedy said his first-year focus is on getting dozens of big companies on board to join iCAMR, just as **Harris Corp.** has, the 100,000-square-foot facility now being built in Osceola is one piece in creating high-wage jobs and boosting Central Florida's economy. Small businesses will play a big role, too.

Here, Kennedy explains why small businesses should care about the project, challenges he will face as CEO and a little-known fact about smart sensors:

How will the Osceola project affect small businesses? The Florida Advanced Manufacturing Research Center will be a giant think tank for small and big businesses. While we will have large research and development projects for big companies like Harris Corp. that want to push a state-of-the-art idea, there's also an option for small companies to come in with a design using smart sensors and have that item built so they can take it to market much faster. By having the center in Osceola, local companies have better access to this technology.

What business lesson did you learn from Lockheed Martin that you apply to this job? You have to establish every relationship with integrity. We have to be open and honest to make any kind of partnership work. During my 30 years with Lockheed Martin, it gave me a good bit of instincts and intuition where things can go.

What challenges will you face as CEO? Telling the story about the impact of this project and how it can help other companies. We have to get that story told so the state will understand what we are doing and how this will enable the economy to grow. We have to be able to articulate the message quickly.

What is a little known-fact about smart sensors? Knowing just how many potential applications there are for smart sensors, from defense to medical and Homeland Security. When these sensors are connected, it creates a whole different world.



Chester Kennedy, former vice president and chief engineer for training and solutions at Lockheed Martin Mission Systems & Training business, was named the new CEO of the International Consortium for Advanced Manufacturing Research.