Success Story: Georgia Tech Research Institute

Electronic Systems Laboratory Plugs into Success with ISO 9001 Certification

The Georgia Tech Research Institute's (GTRI) Electronic Systems Laboratory (ELSYS) provides innovative research, prototypes, and education, which have positive and lasting impacts for GTRI's sponsors. ELSYS strives to maintain technical and operational preeminence in order to honor the trust of both sponsors and employees.

Situation

As ELSYS sought out new projects, the lab started to see more requirements for ISO 9001-certified or ISO 9001-aligned quality management systems. ISO 9001 defines the specific criteria and standards that a company or organization needs to follow to have a quality management system in place.

After working with the GaMEP, ELSYS was able to:

- *Successfully attain the ISO 9001:2015 certification for their quality management system with zero non-conformances.*

- *Install quality as part of the organizational culture and in day-to-day operations.*

- *Enable GTRI to competitively bid on very large multi-contracting vehicles.*

- *Identify focus areas for operational efficiency improvements.*

Karen E. Bolen, the laboratory's quality assurance manager, needed help in creating a quality management system that provided compliance to ISO 9001 requirements, in addition to a process for managing and executing lab work. She decided to reach out to the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech for guidance. Craig Cochran, a project manager at GaMEP and a nationally renowned expert in quality assurance and management, assisted Bolen and her team to become ISO 9001 certified.

⟫ Solution

"The biggest takeaway for us in working with GaMEP to achieve ISO 9001 certification is that we now have processes that deliver better products, on-time and within budget."

– Karen E. Bolen, Quality Assurance Manager

Cochran met with Bolen to develop a strategy and tailor a plan to meet the lab's unique needs and requirements. Additionally, the team took ISO 9001 classes from GaMEP in 2014 and 2015 to learn the ISO 9001 standards, itsrequirements, and what processes the lab would need to implement for the organization.

"We chose a nontraditional route in seeking certification, as it is not common for an academic research and development organization to be ISO 9001–certified," Bolen said. "We provide innovative solutions to our customer problems by creating prototypes and system engineering methodologies, tools, and education to support the acquisition and life-cycle sustainment problems."

Refinement of existing engineering practices and integration of new processes and procedures enables ELSYS to better manage and execute projects. "The difference with the ISO standards is that it requires you to be diligent about documenting requirements and design and reviewing your products before they go to the customer," Bolen said. "The documentation and reviews coupled with monitoring and controlling the environment to produce work products have helped us to establish a mentality that quality should be a large focus of the final product."

See what all the "Buzz" is about.
❯ Connect with the GaMEP

✉ gamep@innovate.gatech.edu

📱 404-385-0630