



# Next Move Group

## We Are Jobs Podcast

with Special Guest: Kim Wilmes

**Chad Chancellor:** I want to thank Research Consultants International for sponsoring today's podcast. They are a globally renowned lead generation firm that helps economic development organizations create real prospects. They've helped over five hundred economic development organizations. Let me tell you exactly what they do.

They facilitate one-on-one meetings for economic developers with corporate executives who have projects soon. They can facilitate these meetings to where you travel to the corporate executive's office and meet them there or you meet them at a trade show or even have a conference call, so you don't have to pay for travel.

They recently launched a service called FDI365 which provides you a lead a day of fast-growing companies that will be expanding soon. Their research has helped over \$5 billion in projects get sighted since inception. I encourage you to go to [www.researchfdi.com](http://www.researchfdi.com) to learn more about Research Consultants.

As far as I'm concerned, they are absolutely the best lead generation firm in the business for economic development organizations. Call them now. They can help you create real prospects.

[music]

Welcome to this episode of Next Move Group's We Are Jobs podcast. I am Chad Chancellor, the co-founder of Next Move Group. We're happy to have Kim Wilmes with us here today. Kim runs Florida's Great Northwest, which is a 12-county region in Northwest Florida. Kim, thank you for being with us today.

**Kim Wilmes:** Happy to be here, thank you.

**Chad Chancellor:** Why don't you tell the folks what your region encompasses, what the territory is.

**Kim Wilmes:** We cover twelve counties; essentially the counties that are west of the Tallahassee area from Pensacola on the western side to the city of Marianna down to the city of Port St. Joe and over in Franklin and Gulf counties. We cover a wide area, a lot of great partners, 12 economic development organizations, one additional regional group, Opportunity Florida, over in-- help cover the rural communities. So, northwest Florida we're the great northwest; wonderful area, the Panhandle.

**Chad Chancellor:** You've really got a unique region because you've got interstate, all kinds of railroads, you've got heavy industrial chemical plants, you've got beautiful beaches in Destin, you've got rural counties with timber. It really is very unique, the area that you have there.

**Kim Wilmes:** Yes, we're very diverse. We've got something for everyone. If you want be in a small quaint area, we got our rural communities. If you want to be in a nice metro area, we've got Pensacola, Okaloosa and Fort Walton Beach in Destin area and then we've got Panama City. So, we've got a lot of growth, a lot of variety. Whatever you want, we've got it.

**Chad Chancellor:** I know you have a real marketing research background and so you've really figured out what your competitive advantages are and I know you're kind of honing in on three of them. The Triumph tax incentives, the military presence you have and the proximity to the aerospace and automotives. Why don't you talk a little bit about each one of those if you can?

**Kim Wilmes:** Sure, sure. Triumph is our biggest advantage, Triumph Gulf Coast Fund. We've got dollars as a result of the BP oil spill, Deepwater Horizon oil spill back when. We've benefited from that. There's 1.5 billion that's coming to our region for the use of economic development to help diversify our economy.

We've got a seven-member board of professionals in the region who can decide how to allocate those funds. There's a process in place. There's 300 million sitting in the bank right now for those who are interested in learning more. The funds can be used for infrastructure and education programs.

We've got already some projects that dollars have been allocated to. They include expansion of an airport that will benefit ST Engineering. We're building an MRO campus at the Pensacola airport. We're spending dollars on infrastructure at the Shoal River Ranch. One of our huge, we call it a giga site, because it's absolutely huge, beautiful and flat.

**Chad Chancellor:** I toured it one day. It took like two hours to see all of it. It's a big site.

**Kim Wilmes:** It's gorgeous.

**Chad Chancellor:** It really goes into both sides of the interstate.

**Kim Wilmes:** It does, it does and so you've got some great products there. Triumph's also provided some additional dollars for education-- career technical education programs, drone, aviation, maintenance, welding, anything and everything that workforce companies need in their workforce now. Triumph is a big advantage for us. We've got some dollars to help you come and expand and locate here, so we'd love to have you.

Another one that Chad just mentioned was our military and the impact that it has on the region from an R&D perspective. We've got six military bases. A lot of the innovation that's happening and they can partner with a lot of our defense contractors in the region as well as the talent.

We've got 130,000 retirees and separatees from the military that want to work for your business. We also have 3,000 military separatees that separate every year. So, we've got a consistent talent pool of folks with great skills in maintenance, flight operations and crew support, cyber, logistics, engineering, anything and everything under the sun.

We've got some talented folks and they also come with those soft skills. I know that's an issue that a lot of folks look for. They've got the professionalism, the leadership, the dedication, they are very timely. Those are important.

Our last thing is our proximity to aerospace and aviation and automotive manufacturers. There are about 13 OEMs that are within an 8-hour drive of our region. So, suppliers, tier 1, tier 2, tier 3 suppliers, you've got a home here and you can reach all those OEMs in a one-hour drive time, a one day drive time, sorry.

**Chad Chancellor:** Your region is so big, in one hour you can't-- and you've got the built-in incentive of 0% personal income tax for Florida.

**Kim Wilmes:** That's right, that's right.

**Chad Chancellor:** That's something you don't even have to sell because it is what it is.

**Kim Wilmes:** And we've got the great quality life. We've got the beaches and the great environment. We've got the culture and we've got everything from eco-tourism to nightlife, whatever you like. We're pretty diverse as I've said.

**Chad Chancellor:** How long does it take you to drive from one end of your territory to the other? To just give the listeners a sense of what all you cover.

**Kim Wilmes:** That's probably a three-- you could probably take a three-hour drive from one end of 10 to the other, but also then you can go north or south and we've got some good space there.

**Chad Chancellor:** So, if a company wants to talk to you about locating there, you can literally show them options within a three-hour drive.

**Kim Wilmes:** Oh yes.

**Chad Chancellor:** You've got a lot of options.

**Kim Wilmes:** Lots of options.

**Chad Chancellor:** I know you've had some good recent announcements lately. So, why don't you hit just a couple of your big ones?

**Kim Wilmes:** MAG Aerospace is a company that is working with the air force. It's the first time that they've got engineers on both the military side and the private sector side housed in one area to kind of help integrate technology between-- and so that's a really cool-- of course, top secret work that they're doing, but a really great work that they're doing there as well as Beast Code another kind of defense on the IT side.

Other projects we've got are drone manufacture over in one of our rural communities, but they've found a loving for the area. The schools and colleges there are partnering with them to build the education program. They got funds from Triumph as well as from the state.

We've got automotive parts manufacturers over in Panama City that's lined up and of course ST Engineering, as I mentioned, they've got-- Triumph just awarded them, well-awarded the city of Pensacola 66 million to help expand on the MRO campus there. Another is GKN Aerospace which has a new manufacturing facility for advanced technologies in Panama City. We've had many manufacturers that have announced like Catalyst Fabric Solutions in Marianna and Eastern Ship Building in Panama City they got a \$10 billion dollar contract to build coast guard cutters and then we've got business services like Navy Federal Credit Union, they continue to grow and expand and currently they employ about 8,000 and they'll hit their goal of 10,000 job goal in just a few years.

**Chad Chancellor:** I really like the execution of marketing. It's just what makes me tick. I like to promote things and get people looking and so I'm really drawn to your marketing research background. You're very strong in research and I like actually getting out there, so talk about your background in marketing research. I think that's a very interesting background to bring into economic development. So, talk about your background and how you kind of got into this field with that.

**Kim Wilmes:** It's a little-- I know enough to be dangerous. I know enough about the databases out there and how you can look at different cuts of data to identify your prospects, but honestly, the way I fell in economic development is I answered an ad in the paper for working at Enterprise Florida. They were looking for someone to help market the state.

I never really thought about the state as a product. I always thought I'd end up in some consumer brand marketing agency to support that industry and fell into economic development that way. So, it's been a fun ride, I'll tell you. Learned a lot and passionate about the state and what we're doing here.

**Chad Chancellor:** I know you recently completed the advanced economic development program that Neal Wade is doing with the University of Alabama and I think Clemson and TCU and

Southern Miss. We were proud to be a sponsor of that program. You were telling me before we got on air that you really enjoyed it, so why don't you tell us about your experience with that?

**Kim Wilmes:** Yeah, I did. I enjoyed myself a great deal. It's always great to work with Neal and see what he's got coming up, but I'll tell you I think one of the true advantages is the people. We spent a week together, got to learn and brainstorm and pick their brains and learn a little bit about what challenges they may have seen, how they may have handled it. Some, of course, success stories and what did they do.

I learned just as much from our own peers as I did from the program that Neal and team put together. Again, also great speakers, great interactive classes, a lot of fantastic information that I gleaned from it. I would recommend that to anybody.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well Kim, give our listeners your website address in case they want to check out your territory and learn more about it.

**Kim Wilmes:** It's [www.floridasgreatnorthwest.com](http://www.floridasgreatnorthwest.com)

**Chad Chancellor:** All right. Kim, thank you for spending some time with us today. We really appreciate it.

**Kim Wilmes:** Appreciate it and hey, let me give a quick plug. We're working with Next Move and they have been a great component of our proactive marketing program, so thank you, Chad to you and your team. You all have been doing great work for us. We appreciate it.

**Chad Chancellor:** Thank you. We appreciate you. Thank you. I want to thank the University of Southern Mississippi's Masters of Economic Development program for sponsoring today's podcast. We work with Southern Miss a lot and they do tremendous research for us whether we're working with a site selection project and we need Southern Miss's help to understand labor and the market around that area, transportation they do a lot of research in or whether we need talent from the University of Southern Mississippi.

We have hired-- their students actually work for us as both interns and full-time employees. So, you can get a Master's degree in Economic Development from the university. They have two

options to do that. One is mostly an online option where you go in a few weekends and one is the more traditional classroom option.

So, whether you run an organization and need talent or whether you run an organization and need research, you should really consider the University of Southern Mississippi's Masters of Economic Development program.

[music]

A special thank you to Younger Associates for recording, editing, and publishing this podcast for us. I encourage you to visit their website at [younger-associates.com](http://younger-associates.com)