

COVID Healthcare Incentive Program

Purpose of Funding: Expand the healthcare sector and create high-wage jobs in a diverse healthcare system by growing the capacity of attraction for both companies and talent. With a specific focus on the work of these companies working towards Covid related solutions in an immediate capacity.

Overview: The CEP is requesting \$2.5 million for a COVID Healthcare Incentive Program (CHIP). These funds would be used to assist with the attraction of employers to the community by assisting with the funding of the following: facility outfitting; offset startup cost; clinical trials; relocation costs; and talent attraction. Just one new healthcare company would create 10-20 jobs with significantly higher-than-average wages in the first year. We are looking to attract 2-5 new companies ranging from Research and Development, Bio Pharmaceutical, medical manufacturing, and AI and Robotics, all in the Covid specific area.

Areas like AI which, can analyze big data sets, improve overall patient experience, and automate repetitive process with minimal time and without human error. Additionally, given its highly infectious nature and easy transmission of COVID-19 through human contact or exposed surfaces, the use of robots and AI can help to greatly reduce the potential of coronavirus transmission by reducing human contact, protecting frontline healthcare workers, administrative staff, and the public at large.

With an immediate need for COVID products, solutions, and research, we are primed to host any of these potential companies within our sector. Expanding into these areas will allow the area to attract higher paying positions alongside invaluable additions to our community of healthcare. These are specifically complementary to our current infrastructure and allow for additional infrastructure growth by having resources locally versus outsourcing to other areas.

Community COVID Impact: CHIP would provide incentives up to \$1 million per project for companies working to directly impact the immediate needs for the long COVID patients with trailing symptoms in our community.

In Marion County we have seen roughly 32,000+ cases of COVID and Regionally over 2.3 million, of which we know 1 in ten will have lingering symptoms or conditions due to COVID. Such as chronic fatigue, difficulty breathing and shortness of breath.

Companies working diligently on immediate need resolutions such as:

- A drug for patients with severe and chronic fatigue, due to long COVID with a direct reduction in symptoms.
- A nasal spray to assist with pulmonary disease in long COVID patients.

Funding would assist these companies in moving forward with the research and development right here in Ocala, creating a direct and necessary impact for not only our residents of the Ocala Metro but neighboring communities as well. It would include clinical trials and testing allowing a first opportunity to our residents.

