

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY/ CITY OF TAMPA ECONOMIC RECOVERY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

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"The Tampa Bay EDC is the logical entity to spearhead this initiative. They can identify and convene key stakeholders across the community who can offer solutions tailored to our local economic recovery challenges."

—Les Miller,
Chairman,
Hillsborough
County Board
of County
Commissioners

PREMISE

A sustained economic recovery can only be achieved with the understanding that both workers and customers must be healthy and secure in the safety of their workplace and the establishments they visit to conduct business. Therefore, this recovery plan is founded on the premise of a continued state of declining COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations, which are necessary for business re-openings and operations to occur. This Economic Recovery Task Force was not charged with developing specific recommendations regarding public health and safety guidelines. We anticipate that Hillsborough County and the Cities of Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace will establish guidance that is consonant with directives issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other federal, state and local public health agencies.

TASK FORCE CHARGE

The Economic Recovery Task Force was charged by Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa with making recommendations that local government officials should consider in order to stimulate the recovery of the Hillsborough County economy by accelerating the hiring or rehiring of dislocated workers and providing information and assistance to local businesses that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



"With the Tampa Bay EDC convening experts on the Task Force and communicating their recommendations to us, city and county leaders can focus on other facets of the recovery process."

—Mayor Jane Castor, City of Tampa

WORKING GROUPS

The Economic Recovery Task Force is comprised of three working groups: the **Re-employment Working Group**, co-chaired by CareerSource Tampa Bay CEO John Flanagan and Hillsborough Community College President Dr. Ken Atwater; the **Retention and Business Support Working Group**, co-chaired by Tampa Bay EDC President & CEO Craig Richard, Tampa Bay Chamber President & CEO Bob Rohrlack, and Visit Tampa Bay President & CEO Santiago Corrada; and the **Recovery Working Group**, led by Hillsborough County Assistant County Administrator Ron Barton and City of Tampa Administrator for Development and Economic Opportunity Carole Post.

1. Re-employment Working Group

The **Re-employment Working Group** is composed of education, workforce, business association, and nonprofit leaders as well as private sector employers. It is charged with identifying training needs for current occupations in demand as well as delivery agents for essential training programs.

2. Retention and Business Support Working Group

The **Retention and Business Support Working Group** is tasked with assessing the impact of COVID-19 on key industry sectors and small businesses, determining capital and other needs to ensure the survival and successful re-opening of businesses across our key sectors, and understanding the regulations and safe operating measures that would be required of them to help restore consumer and worker confidence.

The Retention and Business Support Working Group participants received a questionnaire asking for detailed responses about their companies' and industries' current status and prospects for short and longer-term recovery. During their meetings, the Retention and Business Support Group chairs presented current unemployment data and heard from business association leaders, employers, and education providers about which industries could expect quick vs slow recovery and how dislocated workers whose jobs weren't likely to come back could get assistance in finding training or employment in a new or growing industry.

3. Recovery Working Group

The **Recovery Working Group** is comprised of Hillsborough County and City of Tampa staff. This Group will take the recommendations made by the other two Working Groups and align them with a range of support initiatives already underway or anticipated in the future to ensure that the support framework most effectively meets the needs of the community. These support initiatives are intended to be countywide and serve residents across each of the distinct jurisdictions. They will then submit the final recommendations to Hillsborough County and City of Tampa, City of Temple Terrace, and City of Plant City elected officials for consideration.

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BACKGROUND

Prior to their first meetings, the Working Groups reviewed data from multiple sources including CareerSource Tampa Bay and Chmura Analytics as well as the results of a questionnaire sent to local business leaders from diverse industries regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their organizations. The data provided by Chmura Analytics assessed the vulnerability of the Tampa Bay region to COVID-19 and the potential unemployment rate rise resulting from an 80% reduction in key industry sectors including accommodation, food service, retail and arts and entertainment.



IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS Average Projected Job Losses, United States

Accommodation and Food Services	> 60%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	> 60%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	10-25%
Transportation and Warehousing	10-25%
Retail Trade	10-25%
Wholesale Trade	10-25%
Information	10-25%
Manufacturing	5-10%
Construction	5-10%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	5-10%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	< 5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	< 5%
Finance and Insurance	< 5%
Educational Services	< 5%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	< 5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	< 5%
Public Administration	< 5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	< 5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	< 5%
Utilities	< 5%
Active Military	< 5%

SOURCE: CHMURA ECONOMICS & ANALYTICS

The Retention and Business Support Working Group reviewed the results of the questionnaire that assessed COVID-19 impacts across Hillsborough County's major industry sectors and small businesses and nonprofits. Working Group members were also asked about capital and other needs to resume operations and the regulatory or other constraints that would inhibit business recovery.

"This PPP Program is candidly a lifesaver for me. If it wasn't happening, I would be reducing staff by 20-25% as a caution. If it's possible to get test kits to businesses, that would be really helpful."

—CEO of small business manufacturing firm

ECONOMIC RECOVERY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID-19 has devastated the tourism, hospitality, retail and arts and cultural industries, and Chmura Analytics estimates that unemployment in Hillsborough County could hit 15.5% as a result of the business closures forced by the pandemic. This means that as many as 40,000 people in Hillsborough County who were previously employed in the above-mentioned industries will likely not have access to re-employment in their chosen job or profession for an extended time.

Not all industries are in such dire straits, however. Many are maintaining business or are seeing business fall off slightly, and are adapting well to operating in a virtual, at-home environment. A significant percentage of these companies were optimistic about their ability to bounce back in the next 12 months and felt better prepared to adapt and operate should a future stay-at-home order be required.

After reviewing the research and data, findings from surveys and questionnaires, and feedback from numerous businesspeople, the Economic Recovery Task Force Working Groups proposed the following recommendations.





1. Provide direct placement opportunities for job seekers and employers to kickstart the hiring process for displaced workers

There is a critical need to identify workers in industries particularly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak who may not have the opportunity, in the near term, to return to their chosen industry. Identifying and facilitating resources to either place or retrain these workers in sectors that are planning to hire is necessary.

The hospitality/tourism and retail industries have been particularly hard hit, with many businesses estimating they will not realize current staffing needs for 18 months or longer. It is imperative that we provide access to training and new employment opportunities to the affected population of workers in a clear, concise, and readily available way.

Identifying opportunities in thriving sectors such as shared services, healthcare, information technology, trades, logistics, and manufacturing is key to making a successful transition for job seekers and employers in the region. Designating a significant portion of training and re-employment resources for direct placement to the small business community in Hillsborough County is also imperative to assist in continuity of operations for existing firms, and will assist in kickstarting firms that were forced to cease operations in the midst of the pandemic.

The most critical programs to pursue should be 'On the Job Training' and 'Paid Work Experience' initiatives which include the following features:



Immediate and full support for direct placement into employment, either through direct wages or wage reimbursement, up to \$15,000 and at least 90 days of employment.

A unique training plan for each participant crafted by the employer and CareerSource Tampa Bay (CSTB) to ensure that needed on-the-job skills are attained and retention is successful.

An employer retention bonus, if applicable.



2. Partner with education providers to increase the availability for short term, industry recognized training opportunities

With the recognition that a significant percentage of our workforce will need re-training in industry sectors which have high or increasing demand, we recommend that significant resources be available to the community to engage in training programs targeted to in-demand industries.

Recommendations for retraining programs include:



\$10,000 maximum award, including any and all registration or program fees

Eligible participants would have to document job loss/separation as a direct result of COVID-19

Training program must be currently approved through the Eligible Training Provider currently established by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and represent occupations that are considered "in demand."

3. Preparation for re-opening

On April 30, Governor DeSantis announced a phased approach to re-opening the state for business. However, local businesses may still need guidance from Hillsborough County for safe operating practices. We recommend providing the following items to local organizations:



Back to Business Toolkits that include basic steps and guides to prepare businesses for reopening.



Assistance for the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies to safely reopen while mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

*"We need
a short-
term loan
to carry
immediate
payroll
costs.
Bridge
lending to
financing
other
permanent
debt
obligations
would be
helpful."*

**—CEO of
non-profit
cultural
institution**

4. Provide adversely impacted job seekers with the resources to ensure continued training and employment without interruption

With the undeniable impact of COVID-19 on the job seeking community, it is foundational to ensure that we provide needed supports — up to \$2,500 — to residents who are in transition to employment. Possible services would include:

- \$ Daycare reimbursement (if applicable)
- \$ Equipment or hardware (technology, work wear, etc.)
- \$ Mileage reimbursement
- \$ Car insurance payment or repair (capped at \$500.00)
- \$ Vehicle registration fees
- \$ Certification and licensing fees (if applicable).

5. Consider capital needs for business continuity

The CARES Act provides relief funding for businesses. However, funding gaps still exist for many businesses that did not qualify or were not able to secure loans through traditional financial institutions. Therefore, capital and financial assistance with fewer strings and regulations are urgently needed for businesses that have been severely impacted. Any financial programs should be guided by basic credit principles and priority weighting given to businesses in key target industries to increase the probability of success, a balanced recovery, and a long-term positive impact on the local economy.

We recommend:

- \$ Matching funds and grants for programs that enable restarts, hiring/rehiring, and compliance with health and safety guidelines
- \$ Bridge loans
- \$ Payroll loans
- \$ Tax relief
- \$ Cashflow and debt relief (lines of credit, forbearance, refinancing).

"The economic fallout of pandemics will hurt most for the least-advantaged neighborhoods and their residents who lack adequate health coverage and access to medical care, and who are the most vulnerable to job losses."

—Economists
Richard Florida
and Steven
Pedigo

6. Restore consumer confidence

A sustained economic recovery must address consumer confidence. Consumer behaviors have changed as a result of the pandemic, and there may be considerably less trust in establishments that have not taken appropriate measures to keep customers and workers healthy and safe. We recommend:



Adopting safety and cleanliness guidelines that can be marketed and promoted (e.g. posters or flyers showing that the business is following recommended health and safety measures and infection control guidelines)

Marketing the instituted safety guidelines with a call to the community to restart the economy and feel at ease with resuming normal activities

Quickly ramping up marketing efforts for conventions and tourism with a focus on the safety and cleanliness guidelines as a foundation for return to operations.

7. Invest in an inclusive recovery

For those individuals and small businesses in our community that were already struggling, loss of jobs and business closures as a result of COVID-19 can be devastating. To help residents of these communities successfully navigate the economic recovery:



Facilitate access to Internet via WiFi and 5G; resources for computer hardware, mobile devices, etc.

Focus workforce and placement initiatives on training and job opportunities for residents of less advantaged neighborhoods

Provide training grants or credits to dislocated workers.



8. Protect the arts and creative industries and non-profit organizations

The arts, culture, and entertainment sectors are projected to suffer the greatest negative impact from this type of crisis. Chmura Analytics estimates job losses of greater than 60 percent. The CARES Act does not adequately address these types of businesses or non-profit organizations such as chambers of commerce and industry associations whose mission is to serve local employers. We recommend:

- (\$ Creating budget support gap measures for creative and arts organizations
- (\$ Providing budget assistance for non-profit organizations.

9. Develop a robust and collaborative communications apparatus to serve Hillsborough County and all municipalities within it

Coordinated and consistent communications county-wide would reduce confusion about what applies to residents of municipalities versus those living in unincorporated parts of Hillsborough County. To facilitate more uniform and efficient communication, we recommend:

- (Speaker icon) **Developing a coordinated communications system among local government agencies** for disseminating information about the need to shut down again, conduct testing, etc. This information should be consistent and apply countywide whenever possible.
- (Speaker icon) **Providing and promoting a Hillsborough County-wide resource and guidelines web site** that is clear, updated daily and backed by a customer service team that can answer questions and direct callers to appropriate resources.
- (Speaker icon) **Use media outlets**, social media networks, and business and neighborhood associations to inform workers and businesses of important COVID-19 related news.
- (Speaker icon) **Communicate via multiple channels**, including email and text, whenever possible and feasible.

"We need help understanding what assistance we qualify for so we can keep our sub-contractors working on ongoing projects. Is there help for startups, sole proprietors, subcontractors?"

—Co-Founder,
software
development
company

10. Invest in longer-term economic recovery

The pandemic crisis has exposed some fissures in the local and state economy. It is therefore imperative that we continue working on diversifying our economy. Many local businesses are hampered by difficulty in accessing products from abroad. Technology infrastructure is straining to keep up with the demand by remote workers. To alleviate some of these challenges, we recommend:



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Re-employment Working Group Members

Co-Chairs:



John Flanagan, CareerSource Tampa Bay



Dr. Ken Atwater, Hillsborough Community College

Karen Arnold, Tampa Bay Chamber

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