



Agenda Action Form Overview

The Board is requested to approve Budget Ordinance Amendment No.21BCC000042 to recognize \$200,000 from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center for a Local Economic Development Award (EDA) to then be disbursed by the County to bluebird bio. The NC Biotechnology Center has agreed to provide an economic development grant award through the County to encourage the expansion and maintenance of new business operations in Durham County. By disbursing the funds to the local unit of government, the County is able to maintain a direct relationship with bluebird bio.

Background/Justification

As part of their agreement, bluebird bio will create and maintain at least seventy (70) new FTEs by February 1, 2021 through the following year. Included as part of the agreement's use of funds are the following community engagements and benefits:

- bluebird bio values engaging its community and providing opportunities for local residents to learn more about gene therapy. Presenting to student classes and hosting virtual class for Durham Public School (DPS) students are mechanisms to help bluebird build relationships with Durham residents and directly connect with potential future employees. As part of the DPS 3-2-1 work-based learning program for high school students, these would also serve as the awareness and exposure events. Proposed Virtual Classes:
 - GMP Fundamentals (High School), 60 minutes or more
 - Pharmaceutical Environmental Sustainability (College), 60 minutes or more
- bluebird also values reducing its impact on the environment and its carbon footprint. The Sterilwave purchased with these funds will allow bluebird to reduce the volume of biological waste from single use process components. This will lead to 80% fewer shipments of waste offsite per year. The recycled material can be repurposed into useful materials like pallets used for storage of materials in bluebird's warehouse and park benches, which will be placed in the Durham Bethesda Park recently adopted by bluebird.
- bluebird will also use EDA funds to purchase a key piece of equipment, the Vi-CELL Cell viability analyzer, which uses a Trypan Blue Dye Exclusion method and allows users to load up to 9 samples at once for easy and automated cell analysis.

The North Carolina Biotechnology Center collaborates with North Carolina communities to attract life science economic development projects. Its Bioscience Industrial Development team provides industry-specific expertise and resources. The Center also supports community efforts through its Economic Development Award (EDA) Program. The EDA Program provides performance-based grants to local units of government in support of life science company projects. Grants are linked to job creation and retention milestones for specific company projects in the locality of interest.



The local government administers the grant and allocates funds to the company to be used for project-related investments providing sustainable benefit to the company and community. The Center partners with both community and company to determine the appropriate use of EDA funds. In the case of the three agreements receiving the awards, funds will be used to contribute to the cost of real and tangible personal property investments with portions to be either spent on machinery and/or equipment or operations and/or research and development.

Policy Impact

Durham County has a long history of supporting the identification and protection of significant ecological areas. This past work included financial support for the Durham County Inventory of Natural Areas and Rare Species, completed in 1996. The proposed habitat corridor study will build on these past analyses and include findings from other studies over the past 20+ years.

The study is anticipated to yield current ecological recommendations that may be helpful for the Durham Comprehensive Plan update which is now underway. Planning staff have indicated the completion of the study will work well within the timeframe for production of the draft Comprehensive Plan recommendations. The findings will also help to prioritize key open space protection efforts in the upper Neuse River basin to ensure long term ecological health in Durham.

This grant-funded study supports the Strategic Plan Goal 4, Objective 4.1: Natural Resource Stewardship and Protection – Protect and steward natural resources through comprehensive compliance and educational programs.

Procurement Background

N/A

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact; the County is acting as a passthrough agent between the North Carolina Biotechnology Center and bluebird bio.

Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that the Board approve Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 21BCC000042 to recognize \$200,000 from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center for Local Economic Development Awards (EDA) to be disbursed by the County.