

JOB DESCRIPTION

Chief Economic Developer

Location: Ocala & Marion County, Florida

Classification: Exempt | Full-Time

Reports To: President & CEO, Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic Partnership (CEP)

Position Summary

The Chief Economic Developer (CED) serves as the senior executive responsible for leading and executing comprehensive economic development strategies for the City of Ocala and Marion County. This position provides vision, leadership and accountability for business attraction, retention and expansion, entrepreneurship, talent alignment and strategic industry growth to strengthen regional competitiveness and drive measurable job creation and capital investment.

Accountable for measurable economic outcomes including job creation, capital investment, wage growth, and tax base expansion.

The CED oversees the Job Creation, Business Creation, and LEAD (Lake Economic Area Development) teams and serves as a primary economic development agency for Ocala and Marion County in local, state, national and international markets.

Essential Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the development and execution of a comprehensive economic development strategy that aligns with local, regional, and state priorities, driving sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness.
- Establish and oversee annual and multi-year strategic Plans of Work, incorporating clear performance metrics, accountability measures, and return-on-investment benchmarks.
- Serve as a key member of the CEP executive leadership team, contributing to overall organizational strategy, cross-functional collaboration, and long-term sustainability initiatives.

Business Attraction & Expansion

- Lead and execute a comprehensive business recruitment strategy across domestic and international markets, including targeted prospect development, site visits, trade missions, and industry engagement.
- Direct the development and delivery of competitive, data-driven responses to RFIs/RFPs and prospect inquiries, ensuring alignment with regional value propositions.
- Build and maintain strategic relationships with site selectors, commercial brokers, corporate decision-makers, and state/regional economic development partners to drive pipeline activity.
- Oversee business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts through proactive employer engagement, identifying opportunities for growth, and addressing operational challenges.
- Structure and negotiate local and state incentive packages in coordination with City and County leadership, ensuring alignment with community priorities and return on investment.

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

- Oversee incubators and entrepreneurial initiatives, including the Power Plant Business Incubator and neighborhood programs.

- Strengthen the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem by coordinating mentorship, capital access, and startup resources.
- Support business formation and scale-up across targeted industries.

Talent & Industry Alignment

- Collaborate with educational institutions and workforce partners to align training pipelines with employer needs.
- Advance industry cluster strategies leveraging regional competitive advantages.

Stakeholder Engagement & Governance

- Serve as a trusted spokesperson and advocate for economic development initiatives.
- Maintain active participation with state and regional partners and professional associations.
- Work closely with the City of Ocala and Marion County to fulfill reporting requirements and contractual obligations.

Operations & Team Leadership

- Provide leadership, supervision, and professional development for assigned teams.
- Oversee contracted economic development services to ensure alignment with CEP goals.
- Develop and manage departmental budgets in coordination with CEP leadership.

Qualifications & Experience

Required

- Minimum 10-15 years of progressively responsible economic development experience, including senior leadership responsibility.
- Demonstrated success in business attraction, retention and expansion resulting in measurable job creation and capital investment.
- Experience working with or within city and county government structures.
- Proven ability to lead multidisciplinary teams and manage staff performance.
- Strong financial and analytical skills, including incentive evaluation and ROI analysis.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including executive-level presentations.
- Established relationships with site selection consultants, corporate leaders and regional partners.

Preferred

- MEDP, CEcD or comparable professional credential.
- Experience in Florida's economic development environment and familiarity with state incentive programs.
- Experience operating within a public-private partnership model.

Core Competencies

- Strategic Economic Development Leadership
- Public-Private Partnership Building
- Business Recruitment & Negotiation
- Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Development
- Workforce Alignment Strategy
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Team Leadership & Staff Development
- Communication & Relationship Management

Work Environment & Expectations

This position operates primarily in a professional office environment with frequent engagement in community settings, business locations and regional or national events. Evening and weekend availability is periodically required. Regular local travel and frequent out-of-area travel are expected.

Physical requirements include extended periods of sitting, standing, speaking and computer use.
Occasional lifting of materials up to 40 pounds may be required.

MOVING FORWARD

This job description is not intended to be all-inclusive and may be modified as organizational needs evolve.

Revised: February 2026