



Biotech firm vows to add jobs

ECONOMIC AID: Sarasota
County company
receives \$140,000 grant

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Osprey Biotechnics — already growing and marketing bacterial products that help farmers go green — will double its Sarasota plant space and quadruple production capacity with \$140,000 in help from Sarasota County government.



Osprey Biotechnics seeks natural products to replace chemicals, CEO Vincent Sculla says.

The company, based in north Sarasota and employing 35, plans to lease more space within the next few days to enable the expansion. At a minimum, Osprey Biotechnics is telling the county, it will add 35 jobs during the next three years.

The Osprey Biotechnics grant application, which had been labeled “Project Good Bugs” until Wednesday’s approval of the grants by county commissioners, comes on top of roughly 400 other recently announced jobs that are slated to be added to the region in the next few years.

Some of the biocultures grown by Osprey are designed to be added to animal feed to promote health. Others are designed to neutralize animal waste products.

“Everything we do, we look to find solutions to environmental

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problems where we can replace chemicals which can be toxic to the environment with natural products," chief executive Vincent Sculla said Wednesday.

Out of the \$140,000, the company will receive \$35,000 immediately as an incentive to expand in Sarasota County instead of elsewhere, said Mireya C. Eavey, project manager at the Economic Development Corp. of Sarasota County, which spearheaded the grant application. The remaining \$105,000 will be doled out based on actual jobs added to the work force.

In Sarasota County, Osprey Biotechnics' action marks the third expansion or company move in the past two months. Along with IntegraClick and Suc-

cess Group International, the three are expected to create a total of 240 jobs during the next few years.

Meanwhile, Manatee County economic development officials on Tuesday outlined another 200 or so expected new jobs at Oliphant Financial and Star2Star Communications.

Sculla, the Osprey CEO, told the Herald-Tribune that the 35 jobs he is committing to are a conservative estimate.

Commissioner Nora Patterson echoed that thought in her comments at Wednesday's meeting. "I would suspect that these 35 new jobs are just the beginning," she said.

Sculla is in the midst of licensing a new fungi product from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The manufac-

ture and marketing of the product is expected to provide a strong new revenue base for the expansion.

As part of its grant application, the company revealed its average annual wages are \$53,500 per employee, or 150 percent higher than the overall average for the region.

Osprey is looking to hire a range of skill-sets.

In the production department, the company often hires from the food service or restaurant industries, because workers coming from those backgrounds are accustomed to maintaining a high level of cleanliness.

In addition to production jobs, which do not require prior experience, the company seeks to hire microbiologists, entomologists and plant pathologists.