



Health Care Innovation Council
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2026, 10 am ET
Virtual meeting

Opening: Lt. Governor Collins opened the meeting with brief introductory remarks about today's emergency meeting of the Health Care Innovation (HCI) Council. He thanked the members for their steadfast commitment to the HCI Council's work.

Roll Call: Jeff Johnson called the roll and the members participating included:

Erica Floyd Thomas, designee for Secretary Shevaun Harris
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration

Robert Asztalos, Director
Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Michelle Branham, Secretary
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Dr. Kenneth Scheppke, designee for State Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo
Florida Department of Health

Taylor Hatch, Secretary
Florida Department of Children and Families

Dr. Deborah German, Dean
College of Medicine, University of Central Florida

Dr. Roberto Diaz, Sr. Medical Director
Radiation Oncology, Moffitt Cancer Center

Dr. Amit Rastogi, President and CEO
Jupiter Medical Center

Dr. Rylan Douthett, Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing
Florida State University

Thomas Sabatino, Former Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Rite Aid

Geoffrey Fraser, Founding Partner
Clear Choice Health Care

Quorum was established.

Meeting Minutes: Lt. Governor Collins asked for and received a motion to approve the minutes for the February 5, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded and the minutes approved.

Lt. Governor Collins highlighted the reason for today's meeting, to consider additional information gathered by staff regarding project applications reviewed at the February meeting.

Agenda Items:

Jeff Johnson presented a brief slide deck showing seven complete and eligible projects under consideration to receive health care innovation loans. The presentation included an overview slide for each of the seven projects. The HCI Council had previously requested additional information on four of these projects; project applicant responses were summarized and provided during the presentation.

Discussion:

Lt. Governor Collins reminded the members about the discussion at the February meeting regarding whether these projects met the loan program criteria. He specifically wanted members to confirm that the responses from the project applicants addressed the HCI Council's questions and whether the projects merit inclusion in the loan program. Dr. Schepke and Mr. Sabatino stated they felt their questions were answered.

Secretary Hatch and Secretary Branham provided insight into how some of these projects may meet legislative intent and identify what problems the legislation was trying to solve. Additionally, it was asked if the loan program could be marketed to a larger audience, i.e., those outside of the eligible Agency for Health Care Administration facilities.

There was wide-ranging discussion among the HCI Council regarding the following topics:

- The importance of the opportunity for businesses to partner with universities or research-oriented institutions and to assist them with innovation.
- The importance of projects in rural areas that address health care access.
- The difference between health care innovation and health care enhancements.
- Opportunities for additional pitch meetings across the state, like the December 2025 meeting, where providers can showcase their innovative projects (e.g., Shark Tank).
- Additional methods to market the loan program.
- The current statute limits applicant eligibility to those with certain facility licenses in Florida.
- Opportunities may exist for providers to partner with licensed facilities. Consider ways to create more partnerships; access private funding.
- The current proposals fit within the statutory guidelines for the loan program. Support for these first-year loans, while not necessarily innovative, while the HCI Council works to move toward greater innovation.
- Opportunities to seek statutory changes to the HCI loan program in the future.
- Innovators often need access to start-up funds, need a sponsor who can show them the ropes.
 - A request for guidance from the Department of Health, related to HCI Council members and sponsorship opportunities, what can and can't be done, questions on rules of engagement.
- Options for a tiered approach where some HCI funding is used for loans and some for grants.
- Potential discussion for future meetings to address possible statutory changes.

Lt. Governor Collins requested and received a motion to approve the seven projects discussed in the meeting to move forward for financial risk assessment and funding. A motion was made and seconded.

Public Comment: No members of the public requested the opportunity to offer comments.

Closure: Lt. Governor Collins closed the meeting, thanking the HCI Council for their thorough and insightful conversation to ensure legislative intent is met. He plans to reach out to those applicants who were recommended for funding. The next meeting will be in person and will focus on one of the HCI Council's four priority areas.

The meeting concluded at 11:05 am, ET.

Guests for the meeting included:

Department of Health Staff

Jeff Johnson
Mary Alice Nye
Christina Omran
Dr. Emma Spencer
Jennifer Cooke

Other Guests

Amanda Rafter
Mary Thomas
Timothy Macsuga
WFSU-TV The Florida Channel
Morgan Jones
Cindy Kynoch

A small number of participants were identified only by telephone number and are not included here.