



El Paso's City Council approves \$1.255M to support business incubator

by Marty Schladen \ El Paso Times
Posted: 08/10/2011

The City Council on Tuesday agreed to put up \$1.255 million over four years to fund a business incubator at the University of Texas at El Paso.

The funds will go to the Hub of Human Innovation, which aims to help businesses make a successful start, especially in biotechnology, clean energy, defense, automotive and advanced manufacturing.

The funds will come from a new, 0.75 percent increase in the franchise fee paid by El Paso Electric customers in the city.

Much of the rest of the money from those fees will go to develop the Medical Center of the Americas.

City Rep. Eddie Holguin asked whether the funds would amount to a "double dip" for biomedical innovation, since that is something the Medical Center is also supposed to pursue.

"We want MCA to develop expertise, but they're not ready to get up-and-running incubating the biosciences," said city Rep. Susie Byrd.

Once the Medical Center is able foster biomedical businesses, the Hub will shift its focus from them, Byrd said.

In business parlance, the Hub of Human Innovation is known as an "incubator."

It provides office and lab space, business expertise and other resources to people seeking to start their own businesses.

Gary Williams, director of UTEP's Center for Research Entrepreneurship and Innovative Enterprises, said the Hub will look for "gazelles," which are business plans in fields that promise to attract complimentary pursuits.

Business people call groups of complimentary pursuits business "clusters."

"We don't plan to turn anybody away, but we want to focus on the industries that fit the clusters," Williams said.

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