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More than \$4.4 million in CARES Act money may be on its way to Putnam County.

Gov. Ron DeSantis approved the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act Wednesday for smaller counties, opening up the purse strings for Putnam County. CARES Act funding was originally only for counties with populations of 500,000 or more people, but now Florida's 55 smaller counties that didn't benefit will receive assistance.

"As we have reopened in a safe, smart, step-by-step way, we have had local support at every juncture," DeSantis said. "I'm proud that today, we are able to provide funding back to these counties, so that they can really begin their recovery from this virus."

The final amount the county could receive has not been finalized, but projections from the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities released in April showed Putnam could receive \$4,405,650.

Initially 25% of the county's total allotment will be given out – or about \$1.1 million, according to the governor's office.

County Commissioner Larry Harvey said he would like to see the money benefit local businesses struggling because of coronavirus. He said sanitation purchases to help follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to make residents safe would also be helpful.

"Anything we can do to keep our small businesses breathing, alive, then I think that's something we need to do," Harvey said.

Counties will only receive funding if officials sign an agreement saying the county will spend the money solely on eligible expenses, the county will pay back misused funds, and county officials will submit quarterly reports detailing how money is used, according to DeSantis' office.

CARES Act money can only be spent on expenditures that occur during coronavirus, items not accounted for in the March 27 budget and expenses incurred between March 1 and Dec. 30.

"We've got 12 counties that have already done (this). They've had money for 74 days," Harvey said. "If we just follow their guidelines, we can get this money out pretty quick."

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