

## **TRIUMPH GULF COAST, INC. PRE-APPLICATION FORM**

Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. (“Triumph Gulf Coast”) has created a pre-application process to provide initial consideration of potential ideas for projects or programs that may seek an award of funding. Applicants are required to participate in the pre-application process. Notwithstanding the response from Triumph Gulf Coast on the pre-application form, an Applicant may still elect to submit an Application.

### **APPLICANT INFORMATION:**

Name of Individual/Entity/Organization: Bay District Schools

Brief Description of Background of Individual/Entity/Organization: Bay County Schools, governed by an elected five-member board, responsible for setting school policies which are designed with the goal of delivering the best possible education to each child. Bay District Schools is led by Superintendent William V. Husfelt, III. The district is comprised of 47 schools: 5 high schools, 6 middle schools, 2 combined grade level schools (K-8, K-12), 3 special purpose schools, 1 adult technical school, 10 charter schools and 1 virtual school. The entire school system has a total membership of 27,784 students from Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### Contact Information:

Primary Contact Information: William V. Husfelt, III  
Title: Superintendent  
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Names of co-applicants, partners or other entities, organizations that will have a role in the proposed project or program: St. Joe, Gulf Coast State College, Florida State University- Panama City, Bay Education Foundation, Gulf Power, Bay County Chamber of Commerce, Bay Economic Development Alliance, Career Source Gulf Coast, NOAA

### **REQUIRED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In a maximum of three (3) pages, please describe the proposed project or program, including (i) the amount of funds being sought from Triumph Gulf Coast; (ii) the amount and identity of other sources of funds for the proposed project or program; (iii) the location of the project or program; (iv) summary description of the proposed program, including how the program will be transformational and promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, and (v) a summary timeline for the proposed project or program.

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

This pre-application process will **not** result in an award of funding by Triumph Gulf Coast. Rather, this process is designed to facilitate submission of ideas for potential projects or programs before the Applicant expends time and/or resources to complete a full Application. All Applicants for funding are required to complete an Application, which will be scored, and then considered for award in the discretion of Triumph Gulf Coast Board.

# **BAY DISTRICT SCHOOLS ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CENTER**

## **Executive Summary**

Bay County is considered an ecological paradise blessed with a biodiversity that has historically been the heart of economic activity in the Northwest region. Economic efforts to increase tourism, active-living retirement, and industry foothold features an unequivocal Southern landscape that includes the “World’s Most Beautiful Beaches”, the pristine bays and a lifestyle that can be found nowhere else in the world. Not only has Bay County’s ecological landscape been a draw to those outside of the region for tourism and business expansion prospects, Bay County residents have been financially dependent upon the commerce created around the Gulf Coast ecosystem.

However, the ecological paradise that provides wealth to the region is fragile. The area is impacted by both natural and unnatural forces. On April 20, 2010, the most catastrophic environmental disaster occurred when over an estimated 200 million gallons of oil was spilled in the Gulf of Mexico. The area suffered not only dire economic consequences but a long-term environmental impact that is still unknown. Thus, it is imperative that efforts to maintain the healthiness of the area’s economy that is dependent upon the local biodiversity includes an approach that educates students about how environmental disasters happen, cultivates environmental literacy and stewardship and promotes the development of scientific approaches that can preserve the environment. Bay District Schools, with its partners, proposes the development of an Environmental Sciences Center (ESC) that informs all those who live in, visits and does business in Northwest Florida. This project is not only an environmental priority but also an economic one.

The goals outlined in the Northwest Florida Forward report, *A Regional Strategy for Economic Transformation* prioritizes the need to invest in Talent, Business Vitality, Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Quality of Place to create transformational change in the Northwest Florida region. Investment in an exemplary Environmental Sciences Center in Bay County fully aligns with the goals to improve the quality of place, infrastructure and STEM related talent needs of the region. The project further aligns with both the Triumph Funds and County’s priorities by benefitting the environment and supporting the tourism sector.

Modeled after the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center, the proposed Environmental Sciences Center would be the first of its kind in Bay County. Bay District School educators will engage visitors in student-centered, project-based learning that results in a deeper understanding of the importance of addressing future environmental concerns. Programs will also educate participants about how a healthy environment is linked to a healthy economy, student performance, and active stewardship to ensure ecological integrity. Curriculum offered would adapt innovative models for STEM education that promotes outside of the classroom environmental education that takes advantage of the “living classroom” in the surrounding landscape.

The ESC would be constructed by Bay District Schools and would dedicate personnel to adapt innovative models for STEM education that applies outside of the classroom environmental education curriculum. Programs in the center would be accessible to all residents and visitors including, but not limited to: student field trips, home school networks, church groups, industry partners, research institutions, and tourism. The ESC would be built to promote the natural surroundings and would include a conference center, meeting space, outdoor classrooms, science labs, and an adaptable display area that provides hands-on environmental education. Bay District School science students will use this

facility to engage in programs working with actual examples of environmental conservation, native biology, invasive species, water quality investigation, habitat enhancement, and ecological succession.

The ESC will also serve as a shared regional facility for student learning and by providing satellite space for local environmental science projects, science career exploration days, science fair coaching sessions, STEM classroom instruction and other science-based enrichment activities. Additionally, the ESC will work in collaboration with other nature and environmental centers in neighboring school districts throughout the Northwest Florida region as well as other educational partners to identify approaches to address immediate and future environmental concerns.

**i. Amount of funds being sought from Triumph Gulf Coast**

The total cost of the project is estimated to be over 4.5 million dollars. Bay District Schools requests a total of 4.5 million for the project.

**ii. The amount and other sources of funds for the proposed project or program.**

Bay District Schools will commit a total of \$370,000 for the project: \$120,000 for personnel; \$150,000 for technology from the half-cent sales tax allocation; and \$100,000 for the overall maintenance and supplies for the project. If funded, potential donors will be approached to request a contribution of land for this project. Government and private grants will also be pursued to enrich offerings located at the center.

**iii. The location of the project or program.**

The location of the Environmental Sciences Center is to be determined. If funded, the ideal planned location would be near West Bay Elementary School.

**iv. Summary description of the proposed program, including how the program will be transformational and promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, and a summary timeline for the proposed project or program.**

Building the first Environmental Sciences Center in Bay County would provide transformational change in the quality of place and the economic future of the region. The event of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico changed the lives of the residents, the economy and the ecosystem forever. The long-term impact of the oil dispersing in the water is yet to be fully discovered. Therefore, it is critical for the youth and families in the region to become more informed and be better prepared to develop scientific approaches to addressing such disasters. According to a report published to inform potential funders by the Environmental Education Coalition, *A Field Guided to Environmental Literacy: Making Strategic Investments in Environmental Education*, "Education is the only tool that treats the true cause and not just the symptoms of environmental degradation". The preservation of Bay County's precious commodity--its natural environment--depends on the active Stewardship of our citizens, the

development of future environmental scientists and educators, and the support of research and innovation that can reduce the harmful impact of unnatural disruption to the local ecosystem.

The project is transformational as it benefits not only the environment but strengthens the cradle to career approach to K-20 STEM education. It will be a unique local attraction open to the public promoting the region's most valuable natural assets, enriching science curriculum, fostering interest in STEM career pathway, and encouraging competitive excellence in student-centered learning in areas such as earth and environmental science.

The ESC would be a welcomed destination for tourists and resident families that seek out places for non-traditional learning and inspires young scientists. A *National Survey on American's participation on Outdoor Recreation* conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture finds that over 134 million people visited nature centers in 2000. Visiting campers, ecotourists, snowbirds, educators and families are an immediate segment of the population that would include the ESC as a place to visit that appreciates the region's environmental landscape. Additionally, the ESC will attract more field trips from other counties that are eager to learn more about the unique environmental qualities and issues that is within Bay County.

The ESC will make a substantial change in the development of talent throughout the region that can enter the workforce pipeline. There are many Bay District students that participate in schoolwide and regional science based competitions that strive to be competitive during state and national Science Fairs. These students are the best of the best and need more opportunities to nurture their scientific curiosity and engage in project-based learning. These students are candidates for becoming the high-skilled STEM workers that prospective companies are seeking out.

## **V. Timeline**

If funded, a timeline for construction would begin after securing contribution for the land. The design process and construction of the ESC is planned to take 1.5 years to complete.