

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: School District of Okaloosa County

Brief Description of Background of Individual/Entity/Organization: The Okaloosa County School District (OCS D) serves approximately 32,000 students and operates thirty-nine neighborhood public schools and one digital learning school. Included in the school system are nineteen elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools, two K-12 schools, one K-8 school, one 3-8 performing arts academy in cooperation with the Northwest Florida Ballet, two schools for significantly cognitively delayed students, and one alternative education high school facility. In this district, a professional culture exists in which a high level of performance is expected of OCS D students; therefore, all students engage in rigorous, standards-based curriculum that promotes critical thinking and application of learning across content areas with the ultimate purpose of inspiring a lifelong passion for learning. Because of this high-performance level, the OCS D was one of only three districts in the state that earned a grade of A for two years in a row under the state of Florida’s new grading system and the only school district in northwest Florida to earn this accomplishment.

Contact Information:

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Names of co-applicants, partners or other entities, organizations that will have a role in the proposed project or program: N/A

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.

Project Description

The Okaloosa County School District was the birthplace of today's modern Career and Technical Education programs across Florida through the creation of CHOICE (Community High: Okaloosa Institutes for Career Education). Based on the District's demonstrated success in preparing students for work as evidenced by earned industry certifications, we believe there is no better place to invest than in Okaloosa County schools, a continued state leader of Career and Technical Education. The District intends to submit a grant application in the amount of \$45,000,000 for our **VEINS (Vocational Education In Need of Support) Project**. Career and Technical Education (CTE) is like a vein, whose sole purpose is to supply oxygen-depleted blood to the heart. Many of the Okaloosa County School District's CTE programs are oxygen-depleted and need cutting edge equipment and facilities to be revived in order to supply the workforce—*oxygen*—to our local, diverse industries.

Northwest Florida Forward, a regional strategic initiative focused on driving economic vitality and growth in the Florida Panhandle, has identified as one of its goals the need to “connect the talent assets of Northwest Florida to key industry clusters and ensure a dynamic and diverse workforce for new and growing business” (*Northwest Florida Forward, 2017, p. 7*). In order for the Okaloosa County School District to assist in making the talent connection, we have to prepare students to be the “*oxygen*” in the highly competitive workforce environment. Educated, highly trained students will strengthen the local community's economy through targeted recruitment of new businesses and will support existing business expansions (*Northwest Florida Forward, 2017, p. 8*). To achieve this goal and transform Okaloosa County, it is important that we offer students customized workforce training programs in modernized facilities with equipment that meets current industry standards.

Since “access to talent continues to be the chief site selection factor for companies planning new facilities, expansion, and/or relocation,” the focus for this Triumph Gulf Coast proposal is to promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement by meeting the area's workforce demand and be a reason for businesses to relocate to our area (*Northwest Florida Forward, 2017, p. 12*).

The proposed project will be a stimulus for transforming the local area in meeting the talent demand in multiple ways.

- Construction of a modernized facility at Crestview High School to encompass Career and Technical Education programs at the school, including but not limited to, Allied Health, Culinary, Cybersecurity, IT, Robotics, Manufacturing and Cosmetology
- Expansion and modernization of current facilities at Niceville High School, creating a combined location for all of the school's workforce programs, including but not limited to, Allied Health, Culinary, Cybersecurity, IT, Robotics and Manufacturing
- Modernization of equipment in all CTE labs at Baker School, Choctawhatchee High School, OTC high school programs, Fort Walton Beach High School, and Laurel Hill School to provide industry standard equipment.

Estimated Project Timeline

Task	Proposed Timeframe
Project Start-Up	February 2018
Facility Design Submission and Approval by OCSD	March 2018
Begin Project Construction	April 2018
Complete Project Construction	18-24 months

The proposed buildings and updates will significantly increase the District's ability to support the workforce needs of current and future industry in our region.

Triumph Gulf Coast funding will allow the schools to grow the educational opportunities for students through state-of-the-art Career and Technical Education classrooms and lab facilities. The funding will also expand work-based learning and career exploration opportunities for students that will build a bridge in the gap between academic and career planning. The **VEINS** Project will potentially influence 5,000 students in the first year.

Okaloosa schools are among the oldest in the State of Florida. Our seven high schools have had little or no updates to their facilities and have been limited in their equipment updates because of lack of funding. Career programs at all of the high schools offer students rigorous academic career pathways for all facets of the workforce ranging from cybersecurity to manufacturing to welding and everything in between. As is the case with most educational institutions, our high schools and their innovative instructors have made the workforce training programs successful using out-of-date facilities and equipment. Despite the aging facilities and lack of equipment, the Okaloosa County School District is second in the state and first in northwest Florida in College and Career Acceleration (*Education, Florida Department of. "School Accountability Reports." School Accountability Report, Florida Department of Education, 2017, schoolgrades.fldoe.org/*).

Having newly constructed and remodeled CTE facilities and updated equipment will give more exposure to the availability of career programs at the schools. The availability of career options will encourage students to make informed decisions about career education and training pathways open to them during and beyond high school, as well as train them for local employment. Students in these programs will have the required knowledge to go directly into the workforce or continue on to a postsecondary program. If students aspire to higher-level careers, with their enhanced knowledge in their selected career field, they will be better prepared to move forward into a postsecondary career program or degree.

At the time of this request, industry and labor partners have asked the District's CTE office to strengthen existing programs to better prepare students for entry-level jobs in our local area or to be a stepping-stone to postsecondary institutions. The Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County and the Northwest Florida Manufacturing Council are two prominent local organizations who have shared a strong mutual interest in preparing students for high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand careers. We have also created educational partnerships with Northwest Florida State College, Okaloosa Technical College, University of West Florida, and Florida State University's SSTRIDE program to create a

seamless transition from secondary to postsecondary for students who choose a postsecondary path.

Directly supporting the vision of Northwest Florida Forward, the **VEINS Project** enables the Okaloosa County School District to help transform northwest Florida's workforce development by providing project-based learning from industry-qualified instructors. Students will gain hands-on experience in industry quality labs leading to industry demanded certifications.

While Triumph Gulf Coast Grant funds will assist in building and equipping cutting edge, industry standard labs, the Okaloosa County School District will invest in the CTE programs by their continued support through the purchase of additional equipment through the Carl Perkins grant funds. With the enactment of the Career and Professional Education Act (CAPE), students also have the opportunity to earn national industry certifications that carry state allocated funding to individual programs earning certifications. At this time, approximately \$2.22 million (not including land and instructor salaries/benefits) is available to support the **VEINS Project**. The District will also provide qualified instructors to oversee the updated programs in order to maintain the quality of the equipment and classroom space created.

In order for students to succeed in life, it is our responsibility to prepare them for the ever-changing world of work. This means we have to prepare our students to be college ready and/or career ready. Career and Technical Education programs are the “**VEINS**” of CTE because they offer unique opportunities to engage students in an enormous variety of subjects, incorporating academic, creative and technical skills, with the specific goal, nowhere else represented in education, of preparing students for life.

Partnering with the Okaloosa County School District's Career and Technical Education program is a win-win situation—no matter how you look at it! We plan to transform our programs from **VEINS** to **ARTERIES (Accelerated Rigorous Technical Education Relevant In Employment Security)**, where we provide the oxygen to our workforce!