

## **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: The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida State College

Brief Description of Background of Organization: The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) is a 501(c)(3) organization and an official program of Northwest Florida State College.

#### 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: The CBA will solicit competitive bids from qualified service vendors to perform portions of the Project’s scope of services which are detailed herein.

### **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. **Executive Summary Attached.**

### **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.

## ***Executive Summary for the Gulf Coast Economy Enhancement Project***

### **(i) Amount of Funds Being Sought from Triumph Gulf Coast**

The overall 7-year Project budget is \$45,092,280. The Applicant (the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida State College) seeks 25% funding (\$11,273,070) from Triumph Gulf Coast which represents the expected startup costs for the Project. Therefore, every dollar invested by Triumph will be leveraged four-fold.

### **(ii) The Amount and Identity of Other Sources of Funds for the Proposed Project**

Under this Project the Applicant is contributing real property at its Okaloosa County Campus to establish a Marine Engineering Institute (MEI). This contribution's estimated value is \$840,000 over the 7-year duration of the grant award period. The College has also invested 25% of the Director's annual salary towards the Project and will do so through the remainder of the award period. Student tuition is also contributed so the MEI breaks even after the first year's startup costs. The City of Destin has preliminarily committed to provide boat-mooring slips and the right to discharge marine sewage effluent recovered under this Project into its sewage collection facility and this contribution is valued at \$390,000 over the life of the award period. The Applicant will file a Direct Component application under Okaloosa County in the amount of \$22,640,714 as a match for this Project. Finally, the Applicant is working with other local governments and industry in the Project area to secure additional valuable assistance to the Project. Finally, the applicant is preparing detailed applications for submission to other private and public grants to fund the balance of the Project. The Applicant has already briefed some of these grantors and is optimistic the balance of the Project will be funded.

### **(iii) Location of the Project**

The Gulf Coast Economy Enhancement Project will be implemented across all 8 disproportionately affected counties. Thus, the Project will benefit the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens, properties, businesses, and visitors in each of these counties.

### **(iv) Summary Description of the Proposed Project including how the program will be transformational and promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties.**

There are three complementary Project components which will synergistically align to (1) improve the quality of the skilled labor force in the 8-county region, (2) prepare students for future occupations and careers in the 8-county region's top growth industry, and (3) maintain and enhance the public marine infrastructure of the 8-county region. A detailed description for each of these components follows:

***Project Component 1: Establish a Marine Engineering Institute at Northwest Florida State College (taught by the College's instructors on its Okaloosa Campus) which is designed to prepare students to enter professional careers in marine industries - specifically vessel manufacturing, propulsion, power distribution systems, and auxiliary systems.***

Northwest Florida State College has documented the increase in demand for marine technicians. According to the labor market analytics firm EMSI, the marine industry has grown by 75% in Okaloosa County in just the last five years alone, and in addition to the growth in the number of jobs, advances in marine engine technology have compounded the shortage in the labor supply of highly skilled technicians to service the more than 83,000 registered vessels in the 8 disproportionately affected counties. Although the industry was able to attract and train technicians utilizing on-the-job training in the past, rapidly changing technologies now require an entry level technician to begin his or her career with highly developed technical skills.

The projected growth for marine engineers in the region is 15.4%, which is above the national average of 5.3% and in 2017 there were 131 jobs posted in the region for motorboat mechanics and service technicians which is 135% above the national average. None of the four panhandle state colleges currently offer marine technician training programs, so Northwest Florida State College is prepared to seize the opportunity to work with local industry leaders to develop a state-of-the-art, short-term technical program to serve the entire region that will enable students to get to work quickly and enable the industry to meet its current workforce demands and grow this skilled sector of the regional economy.

Working in close partnership with regional employers, Northwest Florida State College is confident of the program's relevance and success for both the industry and graduates.

***Project Component 2:*** *The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida State College will implement a STEM Education component within the 38 eighth-grade classrooms across the 8 disproportionately affected counties. This component will expose students to the importance of Northwest Florida's critical marine habitat in their formative years so they develop an affinity for pursuing professional careers in the marine engineering and marine science industries. Thereby this STEM Education component will act as a feeder program for the Marine Engineering Institute which will help support Northwest Florida's regional economy over the long-term.*

A 2006 economic analysis of the Contribution of Choctawhatchee Bay to Okaloosa and Walton Counties conducted by the Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development found that nearly all facets of the Panhandle's economic base (including the military component) are inextricably tied to the region's unique water assets. In fact, water-dependent activity has grown so quickly that Boat and Yacht dealerships comprise the single fastest-growing industry in Okaloosa and Walton County over the past two decades.

Yet, the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida has discovered that unlike many other areas of the state, Northwest Florida's regional K-12 education does not leverage this asset by exposing students to the potential of pursuing careers in the marine engineering and marine science fields and today there is insufficient skilled labor to keep pace with the current and future demand and this shortfall is hindering economic prosperity in the region.

Obviously, there is a significant need to prepare students for these types of careers and the ultimate success of this endeavor rests with capturing the student's affinity and interest during their formative years. Under this Project the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida State College will implement a STEM education component within the 38 middle schools of the 8-county region. This initiative will adhere to the State of Florida's education standards and will feature a curriculum that is focused on the value of Northwest Florida's critical marine infrastructure and the inextricable link between that ecosystem and the regional economy.

The curriculum will be delivered to classrooms via an online database accessible from a variety of classroom interfaces (e.g. smartboard, Google Chrome books, and classroom computers) which will enable teachers to administer lessons independently to fit individual classroom itineraries.

The Stem Education component will support, enhance, and diversify the regional economy over the long-term by; improving public education across the region, preparing students to excel in marine industrial careers, and acting as a feeder program to churn out interested and passionate students for the Marine Engineering Institute at Northwest Florida State College.

***Project Component 3:*** *The Marine Engineering Institute cannot function effectively without an industry partner to provide a continuous influx of marine vessels (and engines) for its students to train with. This Project will overcome that logistical challenge by implementing a mobile marine pumpout program within the 8 disproportionately affected counties. This pumpout program will collect and properly dispose of all marine-generated sewage in Northwest Florida, collect and properly dispose of floating household rubbish, and act as a feeder to the Marine Engineering Institute by providing the 14 pumpout vessels that are rotationally deployed under the marine pumpout program for servicing by the Marine Engineering Institute at NWFSC so that enrolled students can gain industry certifications and practical hands-on experience which will prepare them to enter professional careers in the marine industry.*

In addition to enabling performance of the Marine Engineering Institute, this component of the Project is critically important for the Panhandle because over the last 20 years the permanent population base of Northwest Florida has doubled, tourism has tripled, and water-dependent activity has grown by 600%. During this same timeframe communities in the Panhandle have invested billions in upland infrastructure to

accommodate this growth, but there has been negligible corresponding investment in the quality of our marine infrastructure. Today, most of the bays and estuaries of Northwest Florida are already listed as “Impaired” on the EPA’s Waterbody Quality Assessment Report and water quality testing across the region routinely returns poor results for elevated levels of fecal contamination. Collectively the waters of Northwest Florida comprise a public infrastructure system that is needed to support commerce and economic development, yet they are in dire need of maintenance and enhancement.

While the national narrative for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill was focused as one of history’s worst environmental disasters, the Panhandle of Florida quickly learned that even the perception of polluted water would spell certain economic devastation. That’s why economic leaders say the single best way to enhance our future economy is to protect and enhance the major drivers behind the Gulf Coast’s existing economic engine. In northwest Florida, tourism and the military are our primary economic drivers and both assets are fueled by the region’s clean waters, so clearly this is a problem we must solve.

Building on the successes of a public/private partnership to provide a marine pumpout program in Monroe County, Florida, the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of Northwest Florida State College is soliciting competitive bids to establish a similar program across the Florida Panhandle.

The Project will place 14 special-purpose pumpout vessels and five floating comfort stations (restrooms) into service within the 8 disproportionately affected counties. Each of these vessels will provide free pump-outs to the entire boating community within the service area which is the catalyst that guarantees complete voluntary compliance without the need for regulatory enforcement.

The data gathered through the Monroe County partnership demonstrates that sewage generated by the boating community plays a much larger role in marine pollution than once believed and extrapolating the actual results from that partnership suggests that implementing a similar program in northwest Florida (where there are more than 83,000 registered vessels) would collect and properly dispose of the net equivalent of over 92,000,000 gallons of raw household sewage that may otherwise be disposed overboard in the near shore waters of the 8-county region.

A marine pumpout program like this has demonstrated to be a proven, proactive, practical, and comprehensive solution for a pressing problem which is only going to fester without action.

This component is literally a transformational investment for the maintenance and enhancement of public marine infrastructure which will improve the overall quality of life for every resident and visitor to the Florida Panhandle and position Northwest Florida with aquatic capacity to accommodate future growth and prosperity for generations to come. That is why this component has garnered substantial support from leaders across a wide array of industries including; the military, tourism, local governments, economic development, higher education, industry associations, citizen activists, etc.

As will be fully evidenced in the Triumph Gulf Coast grant application, each of these three Project components will be self-sustaining by the end of the 7-year grant period and will provide continual outreach to the public and stakeholders to ensure the Project remains on track to meet its quantifiable outcome measures.

Furthermore, the overall Project leverages partnerships with K-20 education institutions, tourism organizations, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, military installations, and industrial associations across the region to encourage industry certifications, strengthen career readiness, provide sustainable workforce skills that are not confined to a single employer, and increase students’ technology skills and knowledge so that they are prepared for future occupations and professional careers.

Finally, the Project generates maximum economic benefits, no government expansion, and creates 32 net new permanent private-sector jobs (many of which are in a Rural Economic Opportunity Area) and pays wages and benefits of over \$11,000,000 over the 7-year life of the award period.

**(v) Timeline for the Proposed Project**

The Applicant is prepared to commence work within 60 days of Project funding and the Applicant will perform this work for the duration of the award period and beyond.