## **Applicant Information**

Name of Entity/Organization: Westonwood Ranch, Inc. Background of Organization: Federal Employer Identification Number:

Contact Information: Primary Contact Information: <u>Lindy L. Wood, MSN</u> <u>Title: President</u> <u>Mailing Address: 4390 Highway 20 West Freeport FL 32439</u> <u>Phone: 2054996142</u> <u>Email: Westonwoodranch@gmail.com</u> <u>Website: www.westonwood.org</u>



## Westonwood Ranch

## Identify any co-applicants, partners, or other entities or organizations that will have a role in the proposed project or program and such partners proposed roles.

Westonwood Ranch will be a **true** community collaboration. The unique program design allows our program to collaborate with others with similar missions throughout Walton and Okaloosa Counties.

<u>Emerald Coast Autism Center (ECAC), Niceville, FL-</u> Westonwood Ranch is collaborating with ECAC to allow for a natural extension of their services once their students reach the age of 18. In addition, 85 children currently enrolled at ECAC under the age of 18 will be able to receive horticulture and animal therapy, as applicable, in a calm, controlled environment integrated into their therapeutic services. For those ECAC students following a vocational path, ECAC will begin to transition these students gradually during their tenure at ECAC with the transition scheduled to be complete by age 22. Instead of duplicating services, Westonwood will provide services to children ages 14 and older and the primary focus of ECAC will remain in providing intensive behavioral therapy to younger children.

## South Walton Highschool ESE Department -

WWR has had preliminary discussions with the ESE Department that oversees Community Based Learning at Walton County High School to incorporate aquaponics operation and management into the workday/skills training of their transition plan for students with autism. Further, the vision for Westonwood Ranch rests in serving as a 5<sup>th</sup> year program for Walton County and Okaloosa County School Districts, although a contract does not exist at this time.

<u>Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton</u> -will have an active role in our art studio assisting with recruitment of local artists to host special projects with our participants, but also target art

initiatives within the special needs population. Our facility will allow for an extension of services to the North end of Walton County

*Coastal Blue Commercial Hydroponics*, located in Walton County, has volunteered to oversee and direct our greenhouse practices and serve as a site for internships and employment.

*The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center and Alaqua Animal Refuge have also been supportive of this endeavor and expressed interest in serving as internship/community training sites and for customized employment positions at or above minimum wage for Westonwood Participants.* 

*Special Olympics of Walton County* -Westonwood Ranch will serve as the home of the permanent Bocce Ball Courts for the Special Olympics- Walton team. We plan to incorporate Equestrian Sports to the Walton County Special Olympics program which will utilize the proposed Westonwood Ranch equestrian facility. The central location of our program will allow for greater access for special needs individuals in North Walton County. The synergy we are creating in this area regarding model programming in the autism community will be transformational to Northwest Florida. Programming is lacking nationwide. It is an incentive for military families with children with exceptional needs to ask for permanent orders in Walton and Okaloosa Counties to ensure that their children have access to best practice models.

**The Walton County Sheriff's Office** - is supportive of this project and collaborated with our organization to bring a Professional Rodeo Event to Walton County which was hosted on March 23-24, 2018 and brought crowds of 2,000 each night from the Southeast US. . This will be an annual rodeo in Freeport, FL and will serve as a fundraising event for Westonwood Ranch. This event directly impacts local tourism and stimulates local economy.

**St Joe Club and Resorts-** Announced 3/28/18 that Westonwood Ranch is its collaborative charitable partner. They will be a collaborator in establishing customized employment opportunities for individuals enrolled in our program.

Total Amou	nt of Funding Requested from Tri	umph Gulf Coast-
TOTALS:	Anticipated Triumph Funding-	661,064.00
	Cash match –	353,674.21
	In kind match -	384,900.00
	Total Project Costs	1,399,638.21

# Has the applicant in the past requested or applied for funds for all or part of the proposed project/program? NO

### Describe the financial status of the applicant and any co-applicants or partners:

Westonwood Ranch has secured Coastal Accounting to provide our fiscal year end independent audit (July 2018 year-end). Westonwood Ranch currently has a Tax Attorney, two CPA's and a bookkeeper with over 20 years of financial experience. Our Board of Directors has diverse experience all applicable to the project. We work collaboratively with the CFO of Emerald Coast Autism Center and Mrs. Blalock is also a member of the Westonwood Ranch Board of Directors. Emerald Coast Autism Center had over \$3 million dollars in revenue on the fiscal year end independent audits.

## Has the applicant or any co applicants' partners or any associated or affiliated entities or individuals filed for bankruptcy in the last 10 years? NO

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Pursuant to Section 288.8017, Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. was created to make awards from available funds to projects or programs that meet the priorities for economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties. From the choices below please check the box that describes the purpose of the proposed project or program (circle all that apply)

- ✓ Grants to support programs that prepare students for future occupations and careers at K-20 institutions that have campuses in the disproportionately affected counties. Eligible programs include those that increase students' technology skills and knowledge; encourage industry certification; provide rigorous, alternative pathways for students to meet high school graduation requirements; strengthen career readiness initiatives; fund high demand programs of emphasis at the bachelors and masters level designated by the Board of Governors and similar to or the same as talent retention programs created by the Chancellor of the State University System and the Commission of Education, encourage students with interest or aptitude for science, technology, engineering mathematics and medical disciplines to pursue postsecondary education at a state university or Florida College System institution within the disproportionately affected counties
- ✓ Grants to support programs that provide participants in the disproportionately affected counties with transferable, sustainable workforce skills that are not confined to a single employer

2) Provide the title and a detailed description of the proposed project or program, including the location of the proposed project or program, a detailed description of, and quantitative evidence demonstrating how the proposed project or program will promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, a proposed timeline for the proposed project or program, and the disproportionately affected counties that will be impacted by the proposed project or program.

#### **Description:**

Westonwood Ranch is a 501c3 non- profit development in construction located in Walton County. The 10-acre project development site is in Freeport, Fl. 4390 Highway 20 West in the Freeport Municipality of Walton County, FL 32439. Project design includes a 4,530-sf vocational training center with a covered equine arena with stables and a aquaponic greenhouse serving as a self-sustaining skills training/enterprise for participants.

Westonwood Ranch will provide services to individuals who face barriers to employment, receive the services and supports they need to acquire the skills necessary to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Over the next 10 years, 500,000 Americans with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will enter adulthood (Autism Speaks). 85% of young individuals with autism lack access to adequate employment opportunities. The harsh reality is that beyond the age of 21, individuals with ASD often face an uncertain future. All government mandated educational supports and services will cease. There is a forced transition referred to as "aging out" that thrusts young adults into a lacking system with a hodgepodge of state and federal programs. The situation can only worsen as many children and adolescents with autism reach adulthood. According to a report of the current state of services for adults with autism, "This is a looming crisis of unprecedent magnitude for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families, and the ill-prepared and underfunded adult service system charged with meeting needs" (Gerhardt 2009)

There is a critical need that is being missed. According to recent data by the CDC 1:68 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Together with their families, they make up thousands of Walton County citizens whose lives are touched by autism every single day. Young people on the spectrum just like other typically developing young people — are eager to live independently and work. Services aimed at helping children overcome early deficits in communication and problems with social skills become less available as those students get older. As the population of people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder keeps growing, so does the number of people with that diagnosis who aren't finding employment. Four out of every ten youth with autism will never transition into a job in the first years after high school. They will miss irreplaceable opportunities to explore employment interests and to gain skills needed to build a career, and will likely continue to experience vocational challenges into adulthood.

Students with disabilities face several challenges accessing federally funded programs that can provide transition services as they leave high school for postsecondary education or the workforce. These include difficulty navigating multiple programs that are not always coordinated; possible delays in service as they wait to be served by adult programs; limited access to transition services; a lack of adequate information or awareness on the part of parents, students, and service providers of available programs that may provide transition services after high school; and a lack of preparedness for postsecondary education or employment.

The current federal approach to assisting students with disabilities in their transition to postsecondary education or the workforce necessitates that students and their parents navigate multiple programs and service systems to piece together the supports these students need to achieve maximum independence in adulthood

Our assorted programming will offer:

- Therapeutic Day Program enriched with diverse enrichment curriculum including art, computer technology, aquaponic greenhouse operations, product marketing and sales, landscape maintenance, animal husbandry and culinary arts
- Alternate educational tract for ages 14-22 focusing on transferable life skills/ specific job training with hands on internship opportunities, supported employment, customized employment and creation of self-employment in the form of micro-business.
- Special after -school programming for children ages 4+ with special needs including equine-assisted therapy, art instruction, and special needs dance classes/fitness initiatives
- Summer Horse Camp at the Ranch Westonwood Ranch will provide summer day camp opportunities to children with special needs who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience a traditional youth camp due to ill equipped staffing patterns/lack of specific knowledge in autism.

In addition, our program will provide students and youth with disabilities beneficial opportunities for job exploration, work-based learning, work readiness, and peer mentoring to prepare students and youth with disabilities for employment and careers aligned with in-demand employment opportunities in Walton and Okaloosa Counties. Through these efforts, we believe that individuals with autism and developmental disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, have more employment opportunities.

Our program, modeled after the best practices of TERI, Inc. TERI specializes in serving individuals who have needs which cannot be met by other existing programs. This includes services to persons who have autism, intellectual disabilities. Based in San Diego, California, TERI was established in 1980 and has evolved to currently serve over 850 children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families; and employs 500+ professional and paraprofessional staff.

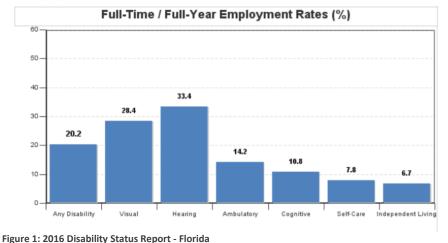
The agency has been recognized as a model program in the State of California for the quality of services it provides to this population. As a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) California Corporation, the agency relies on donations from the community and foundations in order to continue to set the highest standards and ensure an uncompromised quality of life to this population. Westonwood Ranch's program model is adapted from the TERI model.

The Immediate Need/background information: Inadequacies in Walton County and Okaloosa County Vocational rehabilitation services, both because of quantity as well as quality, result in a tremendous shortcoming and a waste of human potential. Vocational outcomes are highly dependent upon the adequacy of the facilities that are available to adults with autism [13]. These types of facilities do not exist in Walton County.

Available research supports the use of strategies derived from the principles of applied behavior analysis and include modeling, structured reward systems, video modeling, errorless learning, graduated guidance, and systems of prompts [11]. These strategies are not new, but are essential to the skill acquisition among those with cognitive disabilities. This unique approach is lacking in traditional vocational rehab services both locally and nationally [11]

Over the next 10 years, 500,000 Americans with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will enter adulthood. 85% of young individuals with autism lack access to adequate employment opportunities [1] The harsh reality is that beyond the age of 21, individuals with ASD often face an uncertain future. All government mandated educational supports and services will cease. There is a forced transition referred to as "aging out" that thrusts young adults into a lacking system with a hodgepodge of programs. The situation can only worsen as many children and adolescents with autism reach adulthood. According to a report of the current state of services for adults with autism, "This is a looming crisis of unprecedent magnitude for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families, and the ill-prepared and underfunded adult service system charged with meeting needs" [4]

Four out of every ten youth with autism will never transition into a job in the first years after high school. They will miss irreplaceable opportunities to explore employment interests and to gain skills needed to build a career, and will likely continue to experience vocational challenges into adulthood.



Full-Time/Full-Year employment of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) by disability status in Florida in 2016 Research overwhelmingly demonstrates disappointing employment outcomes for this group. The vast majority is unemployed and for those who do have gainful employment, underemployment is common. The increased prevalence of ASD coupled with unique social, communication,

and behavioral characteristics translate into the need for services to help them achieve employment success. Services provided through the traditional VR system are less than optimal and do not provide sufficient support [2, 7]. Furthermore, most individuals with ASD, because they do not have an intellectual disability, are ineligible to participate in state and/or federally funded programs designed to assist individuals with other types of developmental disabilities [9]. Such inadequacies in services, both because of quantity as well as quality, result in a tremendous shortcoming and a waste of human potential. Vocational outcome is highly dependent upon the adequacy of the facilities that are available to adults with autism. Available research supports the use of strategies derived from the principles of applied behavior analysis and include modeling, structured reward systems, video modeling, errorless learning, graduated guidance, and systems of prompts [11]. These strategies are not new, but are essential to teach individuals with a variety of disabilities in the workplace but are currently lacking in.

Figure1 further illustrates that our current VR systems are having specific challenges with those with cognitive, self-care and independent living, all of which represent the specific challenges that individuals with Autism face. Individuals with autism have lower employment rates among all disabilities; one may attribute these numbers to VR contracted services often do not have the specific principles of applied behavior analysis in existing staffing model. To assist in ensuring an appropriate job placement, a variety of strategies have been highlighted in the literature. Job preference has been determined through exposure to a range of tasks in a variety of businesses [11].

Research overwhelmingly demonstrates disappointing employment outcomes for those with cognitive disorders. The majority is unemployed and for those who do have gainful employment, underemployment is common. The increased prevalence of ASD coupled with unique social,

communication, and behavioral characteristics translate into the need for services to help them achieve employment success. Services provided through the traditional VR system do not provide sufficient support [6]. Furthermore, most individuals with ASD, because they do not have an intellectual disability, are ineligible to participate in state and/or federally funded programs designed to assist individuals with other types of developmental disabilities [9]. It is clear in the literature that vocational outcome is highly dependent upon the adequacy of the facilities that are available to adults with autism [13].

Westonwood Ranch will provide services to individuals with Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities who face barriers to employment, receive the services and supports they need to acquire the skills necessary to obtain competitive integrated employment. Our program will establish and foster working relationships with local businesses to serve as internship sites and employment opportunities. We will strive to facilitate the training of our local employers to provide the tools they need to understand and tap into the full potential of individuals with disabilities in the workforce through our supported employment programs or customized employment. Through these efforts, we believe that individuals with autism and developmental disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, have more employment opportunities.

In addition, our program will provide students and youth with disabilities beneficial opportunities for job exploration, work-based learning, work readiness, and peer mentoring to prepare students and youth with disabilities for employment and careers aligned with in-demand employment opportunities in Walton and Okaloosa Counties.

Our programming will offer a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between our program participants and employers in Walton and Okaloosa in a way that meets the needs of both. We plan to achieve this goal based on an individual match between strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. We will also utilize self-sustaining business enterprises/micro-enterprise models to create jobs for those who may not be able to sustain employment without ongoing supports. There are multiple micro business within Westonwood Ranch including aquaponic farming, market product production and sales including catfish, produce, and compost. Operations of a horse boarding facility commercial boarding rates. We plan to continue expanding these enterprises that allow for skill acquisition on location, provides opportunities for community involvement and social connections.

Individuals with autism view the world, words, and events in unique manners. What is meaningful to most people may be extremely stressful and frustrating to people with a primary diagnosis of autism. For those needing continual supports, they may live "in" the community, but they are often not "of" the community. They do not always find safety, respect and acceptance as valued, contributing community members. Thanks to budget limitations and staffing shortages there is

often a long wait to receive this type of service in Walton County. The situation can only worsen as many children and adolescents with autism reach adulthood -- a number never dealt with by these vocational rehabilitation agencies. According to the report *the current state of services for adults with autism,* a paper presented at the Advancing Futures of Adults with Autism, Gerhardt describes this number as "a looming crisis of unprecedent magnitude for adults with ASD, their families, and the ill-prepared and underfunded adult service system charged with meeting needs" [4].

There is a critical need that is being missed locally and nationally. According to recent data by the CDC 1:68 incident rate. Together with their families, they make up thousands of Walton County citizens whose lives are touched by autism every single day. Over the course of a person with autism's lifetime, the total cost to society including treatments, care and the lost work potential of both the person with autism and their caregivers — is more than \$3 million, Ganz found. Appropriate job skills training and facilitated employment in a therapeutic environment the downstream costs to society could be avoided.

The Immediate Need: Inadequacies in Walton County and Okaloosa County Vocational rehabilitation services, both because of quantity as well as quality, result in a tremendous shortcoming and a waste of human potential. Vocational outcomes are highly dependent upon the adequacy of the facilities that are available to adults with autism [13]. These types of facilities do not exist in Walton County.

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In establishing our program objectives, we looked at creating small business enterprises that are meaningful, sustainable and would expand employment opportunities for those with autism within the program itself. The creation of this program will increase in aggregate employment, economic growth, and diversification of the local economy. Most importantly our program will empower individuals with special needs to mobilize and gain more control over their social, political, and economic lives.

Though many young adults on the spectrum are considered high functioning, recent research shows 40 percent don't find work — a higher jobless rate than people with other developmental disabilities experience (A.J. Drexel Autism Institute)

Westonwood Ranch is taking on the specific challenge to help young adults on the autism spectrum prepare for the difficult circumstances many face when they are no longer entitled to federally guaranteed services such as public school. Although there is money for young adults with developmental disabilities, not everyone who needs it gets it, and people often must wait. More than a quarter of adults on the autism spectrum don't receive any services, according to a national study Drexel University released in 2015

## 3) Explain how the proposed project or program is considered transformational and how it will affect the disproportionately affected counties in the next ten (10) years

Over the course of a person with autism's lifetime, the total cost to society including treatments, care and the lost work potential of both the person with autism and their caregivers — is **more than \$3 million**, Ganz found. Appropriate job skills training and facilitated employment in a therapeutic environment the downstream costs to society could be avoided.

There must be a fundamental shift in the way we currently educate young individuals with unique challenges... Our program will serve as a model program in the Florida Panhandle for a new and innovative way to address life skills and job skills training initiatives. This systemwide reform must start at the grassroots level.... Our existing government model to address unemployment does little to help people with disabilities lift themselves out of poverty by using their own abilities or to help them avoid falling into poverty in the first place. These programs also reinforce society's unrealistically low expectations about the ability of people with disabilities to participate successfully in the labor market.

The decline in the economic status of people with disabilities despite higher public expenditures has outpaced economic growth. In FY2002, the federal government spent \$87.3 billion on SSI and SSDI benefits and another \$82.1 billion on Medicare and Medicaid programs for working-age people with disabilities[18] Adding federal expenditures for housing, food assistance, rehabilitation, income assistance for families, assistance for veterans, and other programs for people with disabilities brings the total federal spending to approximately \$226 billion: 11.3 percent of total federal outlays in FY2002 and 2.2 percent of the gross domestic product[18]. Today's policies do too little to help people with disabilities lift themselves out of poverty by using their own abilities or to help them avoid falling into poverty in the first place. These programs also reinforce society's unrealistically low expectations about the ability of people with disabilities to participate successfully in the labor market.

Over the next 10 years, we will be putting individuals into the workforce that are discouraged workers and without intervention will most likely remain unemployed throughout the span of their lifetimes

# 4) Describe data or information available to demonstrate the viability of the proposed project or program

The conceptual framework for Westonwood Ranch is based off the success of TERI, INC. Based in San Diego, California, TERI has grown to serve over 850 children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families and employs 500+ professional and paraprofessional staff, since its inception in 1980. TERI specializes in serving individuals who have needs which cannot be met by other existing program (includes autism, intellectual disabilities) ... The agency has been recognized as a model program in the State of California for the quality of services it [provides to this population. As a private, nonprofit 501c (30 California Corporation, the agency relies on donations from the community and foundations in order to continue to set the highest standards and ensure an uncompromised quality of life to this population.

### 5) Describe how the impacts to the disproportionately affected counties will be measured

Early investments in job training and employment assistance pay off. Our higher-intensity program which includes an education or skills component in addition to job placement services—create longer-lasting improvements in participants' earnings trajectories. Reduced need for social services, reduced near-term cost of family counseling and services, reduced long-term cost of public assistance and services, Enhanced hope for the future (reflected in increased lifetime earnings) Reduced or delayed use of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, Greater fitness and reduced healthcare costs, Increased workforce preparedness. In addition to the returns to society, the benefits of competitive integrated employment includes reduced or no reliance on long-term benefits from Supplemental Security Income (SSI), reduced reliance on lifelong on state and federally funded waiver programs, a decrease in likelihood of homelessness and poverty, sense of accomplishment, pride and self-worth

Our program will be unique to the region and state thus increasing Locational Competitiveness – Westonwood Ranch may affect the attractiveness of Walton County/Okaloosa County for population growth and retention, and for business investment and retention. For example, families across the nation relocate for services like Westonwood Ranch. Data collected from Emerald Coast Autism Center reports that in the last (2) years, 15 families have relocated to our region, SPECIFICALLY for the therapy based education they provide. My family is one of those families. The direct economic effect is the change in local economic activity occurring because of this. To calculate this, a model addressing population in/out migration and business competitiveness effects (including attraction and expansion) is necessary.

Benefits from this program are far-reaching. Program will allow for the creation of new jobs in Freeport both in the short-term construction phase but also new jobs. Most importantly, due to

the programs central location in Walton County it enables the program to offer services to a wide geographical scope of the north and south ends of the county. The program will develop working relationships with local businesses in the north and south end of Walton to promote inclusive hiring and will provide the job training skills needed for individuals to obtain gainful employment both locally and beyond. With our current vocational Rehabilitation programs struggling to yield positive results among those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Westonwood Ranch Program Model can be replicated across counties and beyond but by serving as a "best practices' model in addressing the unique challenges individuals with autism face in obtaining employment

## 6) Describe how the proposed project or program is sustainable. (Note: Sustainable means how the proposed project or program will remain financially viable and continue to perform in the long-term after Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. funding.) long term

As mentioned previously, Westonwood Ranch has established its model based upon the fiscally sound, TERI, Inc. which is a private non- profit organization that is designed to provide life skill/job skills training.

Westonwood Ranch is designed to have each of the divisions contribute financially back to the overall expenses of the program. The aquaponics greenhouse design lends itself to be self-sustainable. The greens produced will be sold within the community to and the revenue will go back into the program. Likewise, the Animal Husbandry and Landscape Maintenance divisions will produce revenue-generating services and reduce overall maintenance expenses. The program will be tuition-based, but will also rely on donations and other grants. We also expect to levy support in the form of various community fundraising events at the farm ranging from professional rodeos, fall festivals, community catfish fry utilizing the turnover from our fish stock in the aquaponic program, art shows, rental of the facility as a venue for birthday parties, weddings, etc.

## 7) Describe how the deliverables for the proposed project or program will be measured

Our deliverables will be measured through program outcomes including learning gains, work-related skills, retention or completion, placement, and access/equity

• Average Hourly Wage Gain: track ability to increase participant earnings by comparing "preprogram" wages with "post-program" wages. As a dollar amount, the post-program wages minus pre-program wages for those participants that obtained employment after exiting the

program. The outcome for this measure is an average of all "pre" and "post" program wages for all participants that obtained employment at exit.

- **Employability Enhancement Rate:** As a rate, the total number of students who obtained an employability enhancement (whether or not they entered employment), divided by the total number of students enrolled in the program year.
- Entered Employment Rate: The number of students who entered unsubsidized employment at program completion divided by the total number of students at program completion.
- **Positive Termination Rate:** As a rate, those who either entered unsubsidized employment at program completion or attained an employability enhancement, divided by all students that completed program enrolled in the program year.

## PRIORITIES

- ✓ Generate maximum estimated economic benefits, based on tools and models not generally employed by economic input-output analysis, including cost-benefit, return on investment, or dynamic scoring techniques to determine how the long term economic growth potential of the disproportionately affected counties may be enhanced by the investment.
- ✓ Increase household income in the disproportionately affected counties above national average household income
- ✓ Leverage or further enhance key regional assets, including educational institutions, research facilities, and military bases
- ✓ Benefit the environment, in addition to the economy
- ✓ Provide outcome measures
- ✓ Partner with K-20 educational institutions or school districts located within the disproportionately affected counties as of Jan 1, 2017.
- ✓ Are recommended by the board of county commissioners of the county in which the project or program will be located.
- ✓ Partner with convention and visitor bureaus, tourist development councils, or chambers of commerce located within the disproportionately affected counties.

## 2. Please explain how the proposed project meets the priorities identifies above.

## estimated economic benefits

The participants at Westonwood Ranch are underrepresented in the labor force, it is reasonable to think that without intervention, these people would remain discouraged workers. In addition to new economic growth, it is important to note the impacts of Westonwood Ranch will make on lost work potential of both the person with autism and their caregivers. Over the course of a person with autism's lifetime, the total cost to society including treatments is more than \$3 million [4].

The primary data used to illustrate the costs and benefits of vocational rehabilitation programs were obtained from a summary of the R-911 statistics report annually submitted by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The data used in this study were for federal Fiscal Year (FY) 1998. Methods adapted in this study estimated the cost of lost output and the resulting cost of unemployment. The total number of Floridians aged 16–64 potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services but not served was estimated to be 230,000 in 1990, out of a population potentially eligible for services of over 600,000 [5]

According to data summarized in the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Report, the overall average annual earnings positive employment outcome was reported to be \$2,820 at the time of application and \$13,227 after closure. Using these figures, the lost output attributable to unemployment is approximately \$2.4 billion [230,000 x (\$13,227 - \$2,820)]. For example, if 500,000 Floridians were eligible for but not receiving vocational rehabilitation services, the resulting lost output would be over \$5 billion.

Figure 2 ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR FLORIDIANS WITH DISABILITIES: Source: Hemenway (2009)

Category	Estimated Cost
Lost output resulting from unemployment	\$2.6–\$5+ billion
Social Security payments	\$3.9 billion
Medical payments (public)	\$1.6 billion (\$1,568 per person)
Total	\$8.1–\$10.5 billion

It is difficult to translate these numbers to specific data related to autism unemployment as it is important to note that an estimated 90% of those with autism are unemployed and typically do not have any income upon service entry, resulting in a higher rate of lost input. The majority of available studies are only counting those that made it to the VR system to begin with. According to a 2009 VR Study, one state VR agency documented a 90% drop out rate for clients with Autism...Researcher Scott Standifer states "The first and emergent issue is that many traditional vocational rehabilitation appears to be actively distressing them but we don't know why" [14]

Additionally, the costs of Social Security benefits to Floridians with disabilities and/or their dependents were approximately \$323 million in December 1998. This gives an estimated annual cost of SSI and SSDI programs for individuals with disabilities in Florida of \$3.9 billion. Data also supports that per capita medical expenditures were over four times as much for people with disabilities than for those without. It is reasonable to assume that structured programs that provide preventative self- help/self-care skills such as Westonwood Ranch would reduce medical expenditures to some degree.

Finally, increased tax contributions were estimated as 23% of earnings increases, equal to \$20.4

million annually, or about \$693 annually per individual that gained employment as a result of a vocational rehabilitation program (closed cases).

Figure 2: Estimated Benefits of Individuals in Closed Vocational rehabilitation
cases. Source Hemenway (2009)

Benefit Category	Average Annual Benefits	Total Annual Benefits		
a. gain in earnings	\$3,011.32	\$88,760,724		
b. reduction in public assistance payments	\$178.71	\$5,267,436		
c. reduction in public assistance costs	\$17.87	\$526,744		
c. increased tax contributions	\$692.60	\$20,414,967		

Cost of unemployment for Floridians with Disabilities is estimated to be 8.1-10.5 billion dollars annually. 2.6-5 billion lost productivity, 3.9 billion in Social Security payments, 1.6 billion in public funds spent on health care and medical services.

Early investments in job training and employment assistance pay off. Our higher-intensity program which includes an education or skills component in addition to job placement servicescreate longer-lasting improvements in participants' earnings trajectories. Reduced need for social services, reduced near-term cost of family counseling and services, reduced long-term cost of public assistance and services, Enhanced hope for the future (reflected in increased lifetime earnings) Reduced or delayed use of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, Greater fitness and reduced healthcare costs, Increased workforce preparedness. In addition to the returns to society, the benefits of competitive integrated employment includes reduced or no reliance on long-term benefits from Supplemental Security Income (SSI), reduced reliance on lifelong on state and federally funded waiver programs, a decrease in likelihood of homelessness and poverty, sense of accomplishment, pride and self-worth. Also, program outcomes directly impact the family caregiver in the form of reduced parent stress, A highly structured work readiness program like Westonwood Ranch reduces family stress associated with sibling impacts, planning for adulthood, reduced feelings of isolation

	Participants	Taxpayers	Society
Costs		- •	
Case services	0	-\$1,894.76	-\$1,894.76
Counseling, guidance, and placement	0	-\$826.16	-\$826.16
Administrative	0	-\$196.06	-\$196.06
Total average cost	0	-\$2916.98	-\$2916.98
Benefits			
Increased earnings	+\$3,011.32	0	+\$3,011.32
Increased tax contributions	-\$692.60	+\$692.60	0
Reductions in public assistance use	-\$178.68	+\$178.68	0
Reductions in public assistance costs	0	+\$17.87	+\$17.87
	+\$2,140.04	+\$889.15	+\$3,029.19

Westonwood Ranch vocational services are designed to help participants succeed in jobs that

enable them to live as independently as possible, reduce or eliminate their need for publicly funded benefits, and be fully contributing members of their local

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communities. While public assistance is vital for some members of the community, there is an entire subgroup of individuals with autism that could significantly increase their lifetime earning potential with assistance in obtaining or maintaining a job. This educational endeavor also creates a positive tax revenue from having an additional employed citizen. Figure 3 further illustrates the positive impacts of employment the interest of the individual and our society to assist people with disabilities to remain active members of the workforce.

#### Priorities

- 1. Please check the box if the proposed project or program will meet any of the following priorities (check all that apply):
  - Generate maximum estimated economic benefits, based on tools and models not generally employed by economic input-output analyses, including cost-benefit, return-on-investment, or dynamic scoring techniques to determine how the long term economic growth potential of the disproportionately affected counties may be enhanced by the investment.
  - Increase household income in the disproportionately affected counties above national average household income.
  - Leverage or further enhance key regional assets, including educational institutions, research facilities, and military bases.
  - Partner with local governments to provide funds, infrastructure, land, or other assistance for the project.
    - Benefit the environment, in addition to the economy.
    - Provide outcome measures.
    - Partner with K-20 educational institutions or school districts located within the disproportionately affected counties as of January 1, 2017.
  - Are recommended by the board of county commissioners of the county in which the project or program will be located.
    - Partner with convention and visitor bureaus, tourist development councils, or chambers of commerce located within the disproportionately affected counties.
- 2. Please explain how the proposed project meets the priorities identified above.

Long term economic growth - Early investments in job training and employment assistance pay off. Our higher-intensity program which includes an education or skills component in addition to job placement services—create longer-lasting improvements in participants' earnings trajectories. Reduced need for social services, reduced near-term cost of family counseling and services, reduced long-term cost of public assistance and services

Increase Household Income – Lost wages from the caregiver is a real issue. The economic effects of family caregiving can be examined at individual, family, and societal levels, including (1) reductions in available financial resources of the caregiver as a consequence of out-of-pocket expenses; (2) employment-related costs for the caregiver who must reduce work hours, exit the labor force, and forego income, benefits, and career opportunities in order to provide care; (3) employment-related costs to the employer who must replace workers who leave the labor force or reduce hours; and (4) societal benefits that include the potential cost savings to the formal health and long-term services and supports systems because of the care and support provided by family caregivers [17]

Leverage Assets – Westonwood Ranch is a program that will provide leverage for any family affected by developmental disabilities looking to relocate to the area, especially those families who are currently stationed in the area are asking for orders to stay in the area for programs of this caliber.

Benefit the Environment: In keeping with the green initiative, utilizing aquaponic farming versus traditional farming methods leaves a smaller ecological footprint and uses 90% less water than traditional methods of farming.

Our development plans include installation of a 5K solar panel energy system to harvest electricity to operate the aquaponic mechanical components, lights, and thermo-regulation system within the greenhouse.

Westonwood Ranch will implement a conservation plan outlined by Walton County Conservationist to utilize prescribed animal grazing on the ranch. Well managed grazing is essential in promoting ecological sustainability on grazing lands, specifically improved watershed function, reducing soil erosion. The ranch will utilize an agricultural storm water management system in accordance with the Florida NRCS conservation practice standards for providing drinking water for livestock in the form of water wells – this provides a water source that is an alternative to a sensitive resource. Our ranch program will utilize interior cross fencing which provides environmental benefits including enhanced rotational grazing system and limiting cattle access to protect critical areas such as wetlands. In addition, our grazing pasture will be replanted to Bahia grass which improves wildlife habitat food source.

Westonwood Ranch has a conservation plan in place to address the needs of threatened and endangered wildlife habitat including the Eastern Indigo Snake (threatened species), gopher tortoise and gopher frog – we will locate, mark and protect all gopher tortoise burrows and maintain a buffer space as these species typically share the burrows. We will continue periodic prescribed burning in our pine forest which increases the herbaceous layer for these species.

#### Provide Outcome Measures -

<u>Partner with educational institutions:</u> With roughly 50,000 children with autism graduating from high school each year, this is a growing problem locally and nationally. **There simply are not enough programs in place to offer them the support that they need.** Our program will serve as a natural extension of the 86 children with Autism currently being served by Emerald Coast Autism Center. Instead of a duplication of services, our nonprofit organization is collaborating with Emerald Coast Autism Center. Our program will not duplicate any program in Walton, and in fact, will be truly unique to the Panhandle. There is a dearth of options available in our community. The community contracts that do exist offer supports are time-limited and generally are ill- equipped to meet the full range of needs and individuals with autism require. Our program will give individuals another choice

## Westonwood Ranch was selected by Walton County Board of Commissioners as an endorsed project.

<u>Promotion of Tourism/Partner with Walton Chamber of Commerce-</u> Our organization was selected by Leadership Walton Division of Chamber of Commerce as this year's charitable partner. Our organization will offer summer day camp in 3 sessions will be marketed to families across the country – this addresses a very specific need in the autism community. Strategically located near the beautiful beaches of South Walton, families with children on the spectrum can vacation but also have a structured therapeutic day for their loved one at Westonwood Ranch Summer Day Camp for Special Needs. Many families NEVER get an opportunity to vacation due to lack of appropriate care and structure for their child with autism. In the 7 years that our son Weston has been alive, our family has never been able to travel or consider taking a vacation together. We are not alone. This is a very real issue. Our summer camp sessions will target out of town tourism to the Walton County (Autism on the Seas Cruise Line and Beach's Caribbean Autism Day Camp are two trending examples of this type of model).

Secondly, it is important to note that families all over the nation are looking for best practices models that can provide continuity in services as youth with autism transition into adulthood and are willing to RE-LOCATE to Walton County specifically for these services. Not only are families moving for services, but military families who have children with autism are requesting that Eglin/Hurlburt be their last assignment due to medical hardship. This equates to families establishing their permanent residence in Walton County.

3. \_Please explain how the proposed project or program meets the discretionary priorities identified by the Board.

This is a program that will transform vocational and educational service delivery to individuals with autism and related disorders and will be a truly unique asset to the Northwest Florida Region.

Our project is shovel ready. Focus on customized employment among businesses in Walton and Okaloosa which (new jobs) in addition to the new jobs our program creates within the staffing itself. We are located in freeport FL, located in the Rural Area of Opportunity. We are aligning with a similar program in Okaloosa County (Emerald Coast Autism Center) to serve as a transition program for their students - we are not duplicative to ANY program in this region. Our program will create a Center of Excellence in Job skills/life skills training to individuals with autism

4. In which of the eight disproportionately affected county/counties is the proposed project or program located? (Circle all that apply)

Escambia	Santa Rosa	Okaloosa	<b>Walton</b>	Bay	Gulf	Franklin	Wakulla

5. Was this proposed project or program on a list of proposed projects and programs submitted to Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., by one (or more) of the eight disproportionately affected Counties as a project and program located within its county? No

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Yes
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If yes, list all Counties that apply: WALTON

- Does the Board of County Commissioners for each County listed in response to question 6. 5, above, recommend this project or program to Triumph?
  - Yes No

\*\*Please attach proof of recommendation(s) from each County identified.

## **Approvals and Authority**

1. If the Applicant is awarded grant funds based on this proposal, what approvals must be obtained before Applicant can execute an agreement with Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.?

The officers of the Corporation will ratify and approve the subject transaction, and authorize

Lindy L. Wood, President, to execute all documentation with respect thereto

If approval of a board, commission, council or other group is needed prior to execution of an agreement between the entity and Triumph Gulf Coast:

Provide the schedule of upcoming meetings for the group for a period of at least A. six months.

B. State whether that group can hold special meetings, and if so, upon how many days' notice.

Our Board of Directors can hold special meetings within a 4-day notice

2. Describe the timeline for the proposed project or program if an award of funding is approved, including milestones that will be achieved following an award through completion of the proposed project or program.

Minor Development Order has been secured from Walton County. and is in final stages of permitting. This project is shovel ready. Steel structure fabrication for the 12,000-sf building has a 4-6 week turn around. 120'x30' Commercial Greenhouse material procured and on site. Greenhouse build will take approximately 3 months.

Estimated Construction timeline per Construction Services Inc is a 10 month build with a construction start date of 5/1/18. Upon completion, we will begin transitioning students into the program. Our goal is to begin operations with transitioning eligible students and expanding that number to reach a maximum number of students (estimated 140 students at full capacity)

3. Attach evidence that the undersigned has all necessary authority to execute this proposal on behalf of the entity applying for funding. This evidence may take a variety of forms, including but not limited to: a delegation of authority, citation to relevant laws or codes, policy documents, etc. In addition, please attach any support letters from partners.

## Funding and Budget:

Pursuant to Section 288.8017, awards may not be used to finance 100 percent of any project or program. An awardee may not receive all of the funds available in any given year.

Identify the amount of funding sought from Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. and the time period over which funding is requested.

Total Amount of Funding Requested from Triumph Gulf Coast- 661,064.00 in a non-reoccurring grant with a payment time period completed by Jan 2019.

1. What percentage of total program or project costs does the requested award from Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. represent? (Please note that an award of funding will be for a defined monetary amount and will not be based on percentage of projected project costs.)

47% of our total project costs are requested

2. Please describe the types and number of jobs expected from the proposed project or program and the expected average wage.

Our program design includes a 3:1 ratio and 6:1 ratio learning pods depending on the initial assessment of needs. We estimate being able to expand pods a total of 144 students) over time once Westonwood Ranch is fully operational. At fully operational, our staffing model includes:

- 1 CEO 60,000
- 2 1 Office Manager 36,000
- 3 1 Ranch/Greenhouse Manager 33,000
- 4 4 community employment specialists 32,000
- 5 Up to 20 behavioral therapists 32,000
- 6 1 BCBA Therapist 42,000
- 7 2 certified teachers 42,000
- 3. Does the potential award supplement but not supplant existing funding sources? If yes, describe how the potential award supplements existing funding sources.

Yes 🗌 No

Westonwood Ranch is requesting 47% of our project costs in a non-reoccurring grant. Our model is designed to be largely self-sustaining with local grant opportunities to assist with scholarship for those who have limited funding sources

4. Please provide a Project/Program Budget. Include all applicable costs and other funding sources available to support the proposal. (SEE ATTACHMENT)

Applicant understands that the Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. statute requires that the award contract must include provisions requiring a performance report on the contracted activities, must account for the proper use of funds provided under the contract, and must include provisions for recovery of awards in the event the award was based upon fraudulent information or the awardee is not meeting the performance requirements of the award.



Applicant understands that awardees must regularly report to Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. the expenditure of funds and the status of the project or program on a schedule determined by Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.

Yes	No
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Applicant acknowledges that Applicant and any co-Applicants will make books and records and other financial data available to Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. as necessary to measure and confirm performance metrics and deliverables.



Applicant acknowledges that Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. reserves the right to request additional information from Applicant concerning the proposed project or program.



## ADDENDUM FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING PROPOSALS

#### 1. Program Requirements

A. Will this proposal support programs that prepare students for future occupations and careers at K-20 institutions that have campuses in the disproportionately affected counties? If yes, please identify where the campuses are located and provide details on how the proposed programs will prepare future occupations and at which K-20 institutions that programs will be provided.

YES. We will collaborate with Emerald Coast Autism Center, a private school for individuals with Autism with a current enrollment of approximately 85 students who will need a transition program and offer an alternative learning path for those with autism who require a strong function life skill component to their education in addition to serving as a transition program from those who remain within the public school system.

- B. Will the proposed program (check all that apply):
  - Increase students' technology skills and knowledge
  - Encourage industry certifications
  - Provide rigorous, alterative pathways for students to meet high school graduation requirements
  - Strengthen career readiness initiatives
  - └── Fund high-demand programs of emphasis at the bachelor's and master's level designated by the Board of Governors
    - Encourage students with interest or aptitude for science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medical disciplines to pursue postsecondary education at a state university or a Florida College System institution within the disproportionately affected counties (similar to or the same as talent retention programs created by the Chancellor of the State University System and the Commission on Education)
      - For each item checked above, describe how the proposed program will achieve these goals

We will teach specific skills related to aquaponic farm management and operations, marketing, stable management and operations, landscape management in addition to specific skills training as identified by customized jobs with our community partners

C. Will this proposal provide participants in the disproportionately affected counties with transferable, sustainable workforce skills but not confined to a single employer? If yes, please provide details.

Yes No

To date, we have multiple business entities that will create a customized job within their organization at or above minimum wage – St. Joe Club and Resorts, City of Freeport, Coastal Blue Hydroponic Farm, Biophilia Center, Alaqua Animal Refuge. Are job placements re not limited to a single employer

D. Identify the disproportionately affected counties where the proposed programs will operate or provide participants with workforce skills.

Okaloosa and Walton Counties

E. Provide a detailed description of, and quantitative evidence demonstrating how the proposed project or program will promote:

Economic recovery, Economic Diversification, Enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, Enhancement of a Targeted Industry.

Cost of unemployment for Floridians with Disabilities is estimated to be 8.1-10.5 billion dollars annually. 2.6-5 billion lost productivity, 3.9 billion in Social Security payments, 1.6 billion in public funds spent on health care and medical services. Early investments in job training and employment assistance pay off. Our higher-intensity program which includes an education or skills component in addition to job placement services-create longer-lasting improvements in participants' earnings trajectories. Reduced need for social services, reduced near-term cost of family counseling and services, reduced long-term cost of public assistance and services, Enhanced hope for the future (reflected in increased lifetime earnings) Reduced or delayed use of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, Greater fitness and reduced healthcare costs, Increased workforce preparedness. In addition to the returns to society, the benefits of competitive integrated employment includes reduced or no reliance on long-term benefits from Supplemental Security Income (SSI), reduced reliance on lifelong on state and federally funded waiver programs, a decrease in likelihood of homelessness and poverty, sense of accomplishment, pride and selfworth. Also, program outcomes directly impact the family caregiver in the form of reduced parent stress, A highly structured work readiness program like Westonwood Ranch reduces family stress associated with sibling impacts, planning for adulthood, reduced feelings of isolation

Westonwood Ranch will also impact the economic effects of family caregiving at individual, family, and societal levels, including reductions in available financial resources of the caregiver as a consequence of out-of-pocket expenses; employment-related costs for the caregiver who must reduce work hours, exit the labor force, and forego income, benefits, and career opportunities in order to provide care; employment-related costs to the employer who must replace workers who leave the labor force or reduce hours; and societal benefits that include the potential cost savings to the formal health and long-term services and supports systems because of the care and support provided by family caregivers [17]

## 2. Additional Information

A. Is this an expansion of an existing training program? Is yes, describe how the proposed program will enhance or improve the existing proposal program will supplements but not

- B. Indicate how the training will be delivered (*e.g.*, classroom-based, computer based, other).
  Training will take place on the campus of Westonwood Ranch but also at individual community partners/employers
- C. Identify the number of anticipated enrolled students and completers.

Westonwood Ranch has the capacity to provide 140 full time students an alternate educational path to employment. This program is cyclic and is designed to be tailored to individual needs/skill acquisition to attain competitive integrated employment

- D. Indicate the length of the program (e.g, quarters, semesters, weeks, months, etc.) including anticipated beginning and ending dates.
  This program is cyclic and is designed to be tailored to individual needs/skill acquisition to attain competitive integrated employment. Most individuals will complete an 18 month cycle.
- E. Describe the plan to support the sustainability of the proposed program. Basing our model off TERI Inc and the staffing/tuition model is designed to be self-sustainable.
- F. Identify any certifications, degrees, etc. that will result from the completion of the program. None at this time
- G. Does this project have a local match amount? If yes, please describe the entity providing the match and the amount.

Westonwood Ranch has requested match funding from the local Walton County Restore Act Pot funds. No response to date. Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted. -<u>Albert Einstein</u>

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I have express authority to sign this proposal on my behalf or on behalf of the above-described entity, organization, or governmental entity:

Name of Applicant: Westonwood Ranch, Inc.

Name and Title of Authorized Representative: Lindy Wood, Founder/President

Representative Signature

NWD

Signature Date: 3 March 2018

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