

Application Score Sheet

Proposed Project: Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory Expansion, Ecotourism and Aquaculture Project (#95)
Proposed Project/Program County: Wakulla
Board of County Commission Support:

Total Projected Project Cost:
Match Provided:
Triumph Funds Requested: \$4,950,000.00 (47.19%)
Triumph Funds Recommended by Staff: \$0

Score: C
Date: January 7, 2019

Economic Impact Analysis and Score

Gulf Specimens Marine Lab (GSML) is located in Panacea in Wakulla County and has been in continuous operation since 1962. They are applying for funds to expand its existing programs and implement a Master Plan that was designed by a former Vice President of Ripley's Aquariums. The President of GSML notes that "these efforts will transform the region by creating new jobs, increasing existing markets for marine organisms to scientific and educational institutions, and become a destination for ecotourism.

The application notes that GSML hosts hundreds of school trips annually, provides live marine animals for thousands of research laboratories and universities globally and is referenced as a marine specimen source in over 700 scientific publications.

The application provides a FSU CEFA Economic Impact Analysis of the proposed improvements on pages 56 – 100 of the application. The study notes that the number of net new direct jobs to be expected from the improvements is about 2, or 19 cumulative FTE over a ten-year window. When indirect and induced net new jobs are considered, that number rises to about 6, or 55 cumulative FTE over a ten-year period. Using a standard Triumph reporting convention that evaluates the cost per job after installation of the Triumph-funded asset (i.e., the permanent new jobs), the cost per direct new job is about \$2,475,000.

The Triumph request for \$4,950,000 would contribute 47.19 percent of total project costs. The application notes that "the requested funds will be used to purchase equipment, upgrade the facilities, build a much-needed educational center, and implement the aquarium's Master Plan designed by Ripley's aquarium."

The application proposes to partner with Lively Technical College as a Certificate program partner and with FSU, FAMU, and Thomas University as intern providers. The application notes on page 22 that it anticipates enrolling 32 interns per year and "up to 72 graduates per year" as certificate completers per year beginning in the second year of a three-year grant period (page 52). The application addendum for Work Force Training Proposals is presented on pages 164 – 170. It describes a 14-week internship curriculum that includes 250 hours of onsite supervised work experience and 12 completed academic assignments. This section includes several recommendations from aquarium and animal husbandry professionals. However, there is little detail on the type of certificates to be awarded or on the labor market demand for those completers. Given a \$4.95 million award and 144 certificates completed over the latter two years of the three-year grant, the cost per completed certificate would be \$34,375.

Because of the expense of the project on a per job and a per certificate completion basis, staff score this project as a “C” and do not recommend further consideration by the Triumph Board at this time.

Project Summary (based on information provided by the applicant)

Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory's (GSML) in Panacea is requesting \$4,950,000.00 in Triumph funds for an Ecotourism and Aquaculture Project, to upgrade and expand the existing aquarium, aquaculture facilities, dock facilities, and educational center for K-12 field trips, internships and certificate programs. The requested funds will be used to purchase equipment, upgrade the facilities, build an educational center, and implement the aquarium's Master Plan.

GSML has been in continuous operation since 1964. These efforts are proposed to transform the region by creating new jobs, increasing existing markets for marine organisms to be used at scientific and educational institutions, and by becoming a destination for ecotourism. GSML has historically contributed to the local economy, including starting fisheries markets for rock shrimp, bulldozer lobsters and cannonball jellyfish. Plans include developing a seaweed culture program.

Since 1990, part of the GSML mission has been advancing marine biology knowledge and promoting protection of marine species and the environment. This has allowed the facility to evolve into a popular tourist/roadside attraction and self-sustaining private nonprofit public aquarium. It has expanded educational outreach with the addition of a sea-mobile, an aquarium-on-wheels that travels to area schools and events to teach about marine life and conservation, while its sea turtle research/rehabilitation program is counted among the oldest in the country.

Existing facilities include over three acres of land with aquarium buildings, gardens, and tanks that hold 80,000 gallons of sea water supported by state-of-the-art sea water systems, displaying a wide variety of marine life from the Florida panhandle. Additionally GSML has been authorized the use the “Fresh from Florida” logo in advertising, and displays the logo on aquarium premises and in its advertising program.

GSML’s revenue comes from ecotourism, education, specimen sales, aquarium memberships, donations, Sea Mobile, school field trips, gift shop sales, research contracts, grants, and crowd funding drives and events. In 2017, GSML hosted over 300 school field trips bringing 10,000 K-12 students to the facilities. Environmental outreach programs include taking a 20-foot Sea Mobile traveling touch tank system to schools and festivals throughout North Florida, South Georgia and Southern Alabama.

This proposal addresses three branches of the GSML; Training/Education, Biological Supply and Tourism.

The GSML in collaboration with Lively Technical College proposes to offer three courses conducted twice a year, which will produce up to 72 graduates per year earning certificates qualifying them for higher paying jobs in the growing aquarium and aquaculture industries. The project involves research by aquarium staff to improve aquaculture methods and working with Lively Technical College to develop curriculum. This 3-year proposal will take approximately 1 year to build the new facilities, during which time the curricula will be developed with LTC, and the necessary staff will be recruited. At the beginning of the second year courses will begin to be taught.

The funds provided by this grant will allow for expansion of public facilities, educational programs, K-12 and adult tourist-based activities and programs. As a result, the intern program will also expand. GSML has run an intern program since 2012 with four to 8 interns per semester. They are provided with work experience in marine education and aquarium technician skills. The interns have been juniors and seniors from FSU, University of Florida, Valdosta State, University of South Florida, Florida Gulf Coast

University, Thomas University TCC and FAMU. At the completion of their semester long internship students usually receive up to three semester hours of credit through their college or university.

The financial mainstay of GSML will remain its specimen collecting business, which collects and ships throughout the world, including 47 states, Canada, Germany, and United Kingdom. The marine biological supply operation that supports the laboratory provides a constant flow of animals coming through the lab. A wide variety of invertebrates, fishes and algae are routinely collected and shipped to schools and research laboratories. No aquarium or standard marine laboratory with static exhibits can compete with it. Biological supply is a crucial part of University and college curriculums. Marine life is collected from the eastern Gulf of Mexico, in the 8 affected counties, and shipped live to schools and universities in containers, marked "Fresh from Florida".

Currently GSML is one of the largest suppliers of marine biological specimens to classrooms and research laboratories across the United States. Customer ranges from research facilities, to universities, junior colleges and high schools. Marine specimens are required for labs in a variety of disciplines that include general biology, invertebrate zoology, physiology, biochemistry and embryology classes. Many of these classes are prerequisites for graduating with a bachelor's degree in biology, medical and other disciplines.

Over the past fifty years the biological supply market to colleges has proven to be incredibly stable. GSML is known to universities throughout the United States as the "go to" place for marine specimens for their teaching and research needs. Many customers have ordered specimens throughout their academic careers and have cited Gulf Specimen as their main sources of marine life in their scientific papers.

Today the biological supply business remains crucial to GSML revenue, generating nearly half of its income, and has become the backbone of its popular marine aquarium. The collections of marine fish and invertebrates and algae gathered from the 8 affected counties in the eastern Gulf of Mexico that are displayed at the aquarium facility in Panama City has substantially increased cash flow and become an economic anchor to the local economy.

The United States is GSML's primary market. However, there are plans to expand into Canada, Europe and Asia. Marketing to foreign entities with live marine animals requires extensive permitting and paper work. With increased manpower using Triumph funding GSML can expand into these markets to meet the sales goals set in the financial plan.

The GSML will also propose to expand its ecotourism program. In Florida, "ecotourism" is a diverse mix of activities which includes cycling, camping, fishing, hunting, paddling, hiking, birding, visiting scenic byways, and other wildlife viewing. The diversity of wildlife in Florida has attracted tourists and created jobs, contributing \$552.8 million economic benefit in 2009.

Using funds from Triumph, GSML Ecotourism and Aquaculture Project are proposed to initially create temporary construction and construction-related jobs. And it will fully open in Year 3. 10.5 FTEs (ongoing effort, including the construction/facilities manager and administrative) will be created at the end of Year 3. With the GSML Triumph project being self-sustaining by year 4 and 19 FTEs permanent jobs created by the end of Year 10.

Employment is proposed to settle at an annual 57 total employment impacts in Year 10. 19 net new direct jobs are projected over 10 years (i.e., an average of 2 direct net new jobs on an annual basis).

Specimen Sales	3,281,000	3,316,000	3,360,000	3,420,000	3,482,000	3,485,000	3,504,000	3,524,000	3,538,000	3,554,000
Specimen Sales (scientific and biomedical)	3,281,000	3,316,000	3,360,000	3,420,000	3,482,000	3,485,000	3,504,000	3,524,000	3,538,000	3,554,000
Education Outreach	3,337,000	3,411,000	3,491,000	3,575,000	3,664,000	3,661,000	3,698,000	3,744,000	3,784,000	3,825,000
Tuition (based on 76 students)	322,000	346,000	372,000	392,000	392,000	392,000	392,000	392,000	392,000	392,000
Program Service Revenue	3,659,000	3,757,000	3,863,000	3,967,000	4,076,000	4,077,000	4,190,000	4,280,000	4,370,000	4,469,000
Cost Sales	3,017,000	3,060,000	3,107,000	3,200,000	3,277,000	3,287,000	3,307,000	3,327,000	3,347,000	3,371,000
Less cost of goods sold	307,000	361,000	342,000	330,000	313,000	314,000	314,000	314,000	314,000	314,000
Other	3,700,000	3,697,000	3,761,000	3,737,000	3,763,000	3,763,000	3,876,000	3,966,000	3,992,000	3,955,000
Total Revenue (incl 7 months)	34,400,000	32,440,000	33,000,000	32,724,000	32,824,000	32,824,000	32,853,000	32,870,000	32,870,000	32,794,000
Total Revenue	34,712,000	32,750,000	32,700,000	32,734,000	32,834,000	32,834,000	32,863,000	32,880,000	32,880,000	32,804,000

*tufts as a number in a "tufts as a number" format
 the end of the line is "tufts as a number" format
 the end of the line is "tufts as a number" format

Table 4. Contribution Breakdown

Letters of Support

Aquatic Equipment & Design Inc.

Serviette, LLC.

EDUCKTIONAL

Flint RiverQuarium

Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute

Lively Tech

CP Foods, Thailand

Coastal Ocean Monitoring and Prediction System (COMPS), University of South Florida/College of Marine Science

Panacea Waterfronts Florida Partnership, Inc.

Rock Landing Marina

De. Luigia Santella, Research Director, Coordinator Morpho-Functional Analysis & Bioimaging Unit, Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn, Napoli, Italy

Wakulla Commercial Fishermen's Association Inc.

Department of Biological Science, Florida State University

Office of the Vice President for Research, Florida State University

Imperiled Species Management, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Visit Florida

Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce

Wakulla County Tourist Development Council

National Geographic Photo Ark

Florida Atlantic University Marine Lab at Gumbo Limbo Environmental Complex

National Save The Sea Turtle Foundation, Inc.

SeaWorld Orlando