

Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.
MyFloridaTriumph.com

Dr. Jack Rudloe
President
Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratories, Inc.
P.O. Box 239
Panacea, Florida 32346

March 18, 2020

Dear Dr. Rudloe:

Thank you for submitting an application for funding to Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. We appreciate your time and effort and your commitment to creating a better Northwest Florida.

As you may know, Triumph Gulf Coast has received many more requests for funding than can be supported with the resources available to us. Unfortunately, after a thorough review by our professional advisors, it does not appear that your updated "Proposal #95 – Gulf Specimen Marine Lab Infrastructure Upgrades and Operations Resubmission" meets our purposes and requirements for substantially improving the economy of the eight counties disproportionately affected by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

While you have requested that three component parts of the document (education, business infrastructure improvements, and tourism) be read together, the Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., guiding statute does not allow for that due to the differing nature of the three components. By statute s.288.8017, F.S., Triumph Gulf Coast may award grants for, among other things: public infrastructure projects, grants that prepare students for future occupations or careers at K-20 institutions that have campuses in the disproportionately affected counties, and grants to the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation for advertising and marketing purposes.

The application does not identify a public partner that would own or lease the improvements proposed to be installed using Triumph Gulf Coast funds. Triumph's General Counsel has opined that the Triumph Board cannot by law make an award for infrastructure improvements to a private entity, not-for-profit status notwithstanding. Neither does the application propose use of funds for the statutorily allowable tourism marketing component. However, a Triumph award to a private entity could be considered if it were to provide career and technical education (CTE) for students from the region if it is affiliated with a K-20 institution that has a campus in the affected region. The application does not reference an affiliation with any K-20 educational institution.

Because the proposal does not propose to award an industry-sponsored, externally-validated certificate approved by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), it is dissimilar to other CTE projects funded by Triumph. Triumph has funded CTE start-up programs intended to then become self-sustaining through tuition or payments from other sources (e.g., Career and Professional Education (CAPE) bonus money from FDOE). To date, the maximum ramp-up and implementation time for delivery of certificates has been seven years. Here, it would be reasonable to use this maximum timeline because of Hurricane Michael damage and the rural status of Wakulla County. The program proposes to deliver 165 certificates in the first three years and 57 per year in following years (page 2 of February 2019 submission), summing to 393 certificates over 7 years. Dividing the proposed \$4,595,000 award by 393 yields a per certificate cost of \$11,692. However, the applicant has not yet gotten the proposed certificate approved by the FL DOE.

Because of the lack of an industry-sponsored, externally-validated certificate approved by FDOE, the high cost per certificate for the proposed but not yet licensed training program, the lack of an affiliation with a qualified K-20 institution, the failure to include a public partner to receive funds and take responsibility for infrastructure improvements, and failure to provide meaningful information related to specific performance metrics related to the creation of new high paying jobs in the region, staff score this project as a "C" and do not recommend further consideration by the Triumph Board at this time.

As you are aware, Triumph Gulf Coast is not the only source of funds arising from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The RESTORE Act, a federal law, provides \$6.2 billion to coastal states, counties and communities for environmental projects and other needs. If you believe your proposal qualifies, you may want to be in contact with the RESTORE coordinator in your county.

We appreciate your participation and welcome any future proposals that more closely fulfill the purposes and requirements of Triumph Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Susan J. Skelton".

Susan Skelton
Executive Director