

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 eligibility for potential ideas of 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:

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Aquaculture

Proposal Title: Apalachicola Bay Oyster Aquaculture Training Program

Amount of Triumph Funds Requested: \$75,000

Total Estimated Project Cost: \$150,000

Brief Description of Individual/Entity/Organization: The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Aquaculture (FDACS) is responsible for the regulation and development of aquaculture in Florida. Programs include shellfish harvesting area classification and management, aquaculture farm certification and regulation, aquaculture lease administration, and shellfish processing plant certification and regulation.

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:

- University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
 - Leslie Sturmer – Shellfish Aquaculture Specialist
 - Eric Lovestrand – Franklin County Extension Director
 - Dr. Andrew Ropicki – Assistant Professor, Marine Resource Economics
- Auburn University
 - Dr. Bill Walton – Oyster Aquaculture Extension Specialist
 - Russell Grice – Oyster Aquaculture Business Specialist
- Small Business Development Center
 - Mark Yarick – Agribusiness Consultant

REQUIRED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a maximum of two (2) pages, please describe the proposed project or program and anticipated outcomes including (i) the amount of funds being sought from Triumph Gulf Coast; (ii) the amount and identity of other sources of funds for the proposed project or program; (iii) the location of the project or program; (iv) summary description of the proposed program, including how the program will be transformational and promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, and (v) a summary timeline for the proposed project or program.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This pre-application process will **not** result in an award of funding by Triumph Gulf Coast. Rather, this process is designed to facilitate submission of ideas for potential projects or programs before the Applicant expends time and/or resources to complete a full Application. All Applicants for funding are required to complete an Application, which will be reviewed and then considered for award at the discretion of Triumph Gulf Coast Board.

Please Select the Proposal’s Eligibility Category(s)

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. The disproportionately affected counties are: Bay County, Escambia County, Franklin County, Gulf County, Okaloosa County, Santa Rosa County, Walton County, or Wakulla County. *See*, Section 288.08012.

1. From the choices below, please check the box that describes the purpose of the proposed project or program (check all that apply):
 - Ad valorem tax rate reduction within disproportionately affected counties;
 - Local match requirements of s. 288.0655 for projects in the disproportionately affected counties;
 - Public infrastructure projects for construction, expansion, or maintenance which are shown to enhance economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties;
 - Grants to local governments in the disproportionately affected counties to establish and maintain equipment and trained personnel for local action plans of response to respond to disasters, such as plans created for the Coastal Impacts Assistance Program;
 - 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 certifications; provide rigorous, alternative 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; 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 a 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; and
- Grants to the tourism entity created under s. 288.1226 for the purpose of advertising and promoting tourism and Fresh From Florida, and grants to promote workforce and infrastructure, on behalf of all of the disproportionately affected counties.

Please Select the Priorities this Proposal's Outcomes will Achieve

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.

Executive Summary

Apalachicola Bay Oyster Aquaculture Training Program

- I. Funded Requested:** \$75,000 for staff time and travel for two Auburn University project partners.
- II. Match Funding:** Meeting facilities, training equipment and supplies, boat usage, staff time, travel costs and indirect costs will be provided as match by the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the University of Florida and the Small Business Development Center. An estimated \$75,000 will be provided as match funding by these project partners.
- III. Location of Program:** Training to be held in Apalachicola, Florida, with participation open to all aquaculture leaseholders in the Gulf Triumph region
- IV. Program Summary:**

Florida's shellfish aquaculture industry is expanding throughout the state and now includes more than 725 leases in 10 coastal counties. The industry reported farmgate sales of nearly \$16 million in 2018, a 35% increase over 2012 (USDA 2019), and is concentrated in the Panhandle and Big Bend regions of the state. Nearly 20 years ago, job retraining programs jump-started Florida shellfish aquaculture by introducing underemployed fishermen to shellfish farming as an alternative economic opportunity. These workforce retraining programs were comprehensive in scope, providing both classroom and hands-on training. The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension offered one such retraining program, which introduced participants to the hard clam production cycle from beginning to end. Through these efforts, growers were better prepared to plant their first crop and were able to make informed management decisions.

We propose here to apply the same training methodology to the rapidly developing off-bottom oyster aquaculture industry. Oyster aquaculture — particularly in areas where wild oyster harvest has suffered in recent years — **adds diversity and resiliency to the economies of rural coastal communities** by providing a variety of new business and job opportunities, especially for displaced commercial fishermen/oystermen and those working in seafood and maritime industries. In addition to farmers, shellfish aquaculture supports both up and downstream economies, such as shellfish hatcheries, processors, distributors, seafood markets and restaurants. A 2012 study from UF/IFAS reported a total of 543 jobs supported by the Florida hard clam industry, \$14.3 million in labor income and a total statewide economic impact of \$38.7 million. **Investments made in shellfish aquaculture at the production level have clearly proven to deliver significant returns to coastal communities.**

Over the past several years, oyster farming has rapidly developed in the Florida panhandle, focused in Franklin and Wakulla counties, and interest from former displaced oyster harvesters continues to grow. The rapid expansion of jobs in a relatively novel farming industry necessitates training and extension support, which will greatly improve the likelihood of success for these new businesses. To enhance new farmer success, we propose to develop a long-term oyster aquaculture training program in Franklin county, modeled after successful training programs in Alabama and Mississippi. Dr. Bill Walton and his team from Auburn University will be integral to the success of this new Florida program, as they have led successful trainings in Alabama and are already valued partners with FDACS and UF/IFAS.

This project is distinctly different from, but complementary to, the Apalachicola Bay System Initiative at Florida State University (FSU). The research at FSU is focused on wild oyster

reef restoration, and specifically the production of oyster spat in a research hatchery for use in restoration. This project on the other hand proposes to train and prepare individuals to run successful oyster aquaculture businesses. We fully appreciate the importance of wild oyster restoration in Apalachicola Bay, but distinguish this project as a separate endeavor that is important for the growth and resiliency of Florida's rural coastal communities.

V. Training Overview and Timeline:

In order to maximize effectiveness and accessibility of the training for new and existing farmers, training sessions will be held on Saturdays in Apalachicola and occur throughout the oyster growing season. This will provide convenient training times for those who have other commitments during the work week, allow sessions to coincide with critical phases of production and ensure that topics are directly applicable to current farm activities and skills can be applied immediately. The seven training sessions will occur over an 11-month period and consist of classroom and field components. Topics will start with where to buy seed and culture gear, move into how to setup a lease and conclude with how to harvest and process the first crop. Classroom activities will include topics such as business and financial management, insurance, marketing, oyster biology and culture methods. When appropriate, classroom sessions can be held virtually to help offset travel costs. Field components will offer hands-on skills training at lease sites, and include topics such as setting up gear, inventory management, bio-fouling control and storm preparation and recovery. Hands-on training concurrent with actual phases of production will be critical for participants to gain direct experience. In addition to the seven scheduled sessions, participants will also be able to contact the project team for direct support with specific questions and issues as they occur over the growing season. The seven sessions of the training program will be as follows:

- 1. Introduction to Oyster Aquaculture (January 2021):** Provide an overview of running an oyster farm. Topics will include basic oyster biology, considerations for gear selection and culture methods, labor and financial requirements and basics of seed purchasing.
- 2. Oyster Farm Management I (February 2021):** Focus on gear selection and installation, as well as field nursery options. Additional topics will include handling of seed, as well as inventory management best practices and storm preparation and recovery.
- 3. Oyster Farm Management II (March 2021):** Focus on counting and caring for seed, including size sorting. Additional topics will include bio-fouling control, sorting and grading regimens and determining when stocking densities need to be reduced.
- 4. Oyster Farm Management III (May 2021):** Provide an overview of best management practices, with a discussion of the most common mistakes. Predators, pests and diseases will be reviewed. Business planning and inventory management will be introduced.
- 5. Business Planning and Inventory Management (July 2021):** Cover the basics of business planning and provide tools to help participants create customized business plans. In addition, the importance of inventory management will be introduced, with a discussion of tools and methods to track inventory.
- 6. Harvesting, Processing and Marketing of Oysters (September 2021):** Topics will include harvesting and processing regulations for product safety, oyster marketing and distribution and product branding.
- 7. Oyster Farm Management IV (November 2021):** Discuss lessons learned and implement adaptive management. Considerations for expansion will be discussed.