

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: Northwest Florida State College

Proposal Title: Commercial Driving License Training Program Expansion

Amount of Triumph Funds Requested: \$1,826,770

Total Estimated Project Cost: \$4,393,294

Brief Description of Individual/Entity/Organization: Northwest Florida State College is an open-door, open-access institution committed to serving all members of the community and infusing local industry with high-quality employees equipped with high-demand, relevant skills. The College provides students with robust academic services to prepare students for coursework and to guide them toward success. As part of Florida’s public system of 28 state and community colleges, Northwest Florida State College offers bachelor’s degree programs, associate degrees, and certificates. The College’s primary service district includes Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The College operates seven campuses and centers. In addition to the flagship Niceville Campus, the College operates a joint campus with the University of West Florida at the Fort Walton Beach Campus and five educational centers: Chautauqua Center in DeFuniak Springs, Robert L. F. Sikes Education Center in Crestview, the Aviation Center of Excellence at Robert Sikes Airport in Crestview, South Walton Center in Santa Rosa Beach, and Hurlburt Field Center on Hurlburt Field. Annual enrollment is 8,054, which includes 7,054 students pursuing college credit and 1,000 students taking non-credit coursework.

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: N/A

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.

Executive Summary

Commercial Driving License (CDL) is a growing need across the Triumph region, the State of Florida, and the nation to keep products moving to fuel our economy. Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) started a CDL training and testing program in early 2021 with the assistance of a Florida Department of Education Rapid Credentialing grant. Currently, the program is providing testing for many local students and businesses with testing demand growing monthly. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has recently announced the Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) program with an implementation date of February 7, 2022. To meet the demands for the new ELDT program, NWFSC has modified its current non-credit five-week training program to align with the Florida Department of Education curriculum framework to pave the way for an academic 320-hour class-A CDL training, delivered over eight weeks.

On average, NWFSC's CDL program serves 24 students per month, which comprises 13 students testing, 9 in test preparation, and 2 in training in a five-week 160-hour training program. The greater current demands are for testing and test preparation. The new ELDT rule starting February 7, 2022, will eliminate the need for test preparation, as requirements shift to a longer 320-hour training program. The current staff and fleet of trucks is insufficient to meet the regional demand for testing and training to provide CDL holders. This new DOT requirement, coupled with strong local demand, is driving a need for an expansion of NWFSC's current program.

Needs Assessment

The DOT has determined that the current process to obtain a CDL does not provide safe and qualified drivers at a time when the CDL driver need is increasing. The current requirement to obtain a CDL is to hold an operator's license, pass a vision test, complete a DOT physical, and pass a series of relevant written exams to receive a Commercial Learners Permit (CLP). Once the individual has the CLP, they practice driving and maneuvering skills alongside a CDL holder. This constitutes the entire training the individual is required to receive before signing up to complete the CDL skills test; no additional curriculum or organized training is currently required. The CDL skills test consists of a pre-trip inspection, air brake test (if applicable), basic vehicle control maneuvers, and an on-road driving skill test with a certified CDL examiner. Once the requirements are completed, the individual is able to receive the CDL without any requirement of vehicle training or length of time operating a vehicle that weighs approximately 80,000 pounds.

When the DOT implements the ELDT requirement in February 2022, all CDL applicants must graduate from a prescribed training program delivered by an Approved Training Provider (ATP) before being able to attempt the CDL skills test. The ELDT is a set curriculum in the classroom that requires individuals to complete written exams with documented scores of 80% or higher. Individuals must complete behind-the-wheel competencies on a driving range before moving to the on-road skill competencies. The ATP must document the number of hours each student spends to become proficient in repetitively completing the required competencies on-range and on-road. The State of Florida curriculum frameworks meet the

requirements of the ELDT program and further requires each student to complete 1,000 miles of driving. Individuals completing an ELDT program from an ATP are then eligible to schedule the CDL skills test with an approved test provider. As an ATP with an approved CDL test site, NWFSC stands ready to meet the more rigorous training requirements that go into effect February 7, 2022.

The Request

NWFSC is requesting \$1,826,770 from Triumph GC to support the hiring of a faculty member, purchase five additional vehicles, resurface the current CDL driving/testing pad, and add an additional entrance and parking pad for CDL vehicles and students to provide the ELDT CDL training required for students to earn a CDL. The total cost of this project is \$4,393,294 with the Triumph portion being 42%. The College projects 470 students either trained or tested over the course of 10 years equating to a cost of \$3,887 per training or testing event.

Conclusion

Creating a partnership with Triumph Gulf Coast to purchase additional trucks and hire additional faculty for our CDL program is critical for local business and industry hiring needs. Purchasing additional trucks for bus and class-B offerings will expand the current offerings and allow NWFSC to support the local industry needs while providing strong job opportunities for graduates.

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.

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

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.

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.