

## Application Score Sheet

Proposed Project: Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners, Wakulla County  
Emergency Communications System (48)

Proposed Project/Program County: Wakulla  
Board of County Commission Support: yes

Total Projected Project Cost: \$17,691,930

Match Provided: \$6,782,661

Triumph Funds Requested: \$11,038,669 (62.8%)

Triumph Funds Recommended by Staff: \$11,038,669

Score: B

ROI: An ROI cannot be definitively associated with emergency preparedness spending

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### **Economic Analysis, Impact and Score**

Wakulla County is seeking up to \$11,038,669 in Triumph Gulf Coast funding to purchase a new emergency communications system (the “system”) for Wakulla County Fire and Rescue (WCFR), Wakulla County Sheriff’s Office (WCSO), Emergency Management Services, Wakulla County School District and Wakulla County Public Works. The requested funds will be used to build the system based on engineering and design provided by TUSA, implement the system, train the impacted personnel and place the system in service and ensure it is operational. The vendor will be competitively procured by Wakulla County.

The proposed award represents 62.8 percent of total project costs of \$17,562,530. The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners approved this project as the number one (1) priority on the Triumph Gulf Coast projects list and submitted that projects list to Triumph’s Board in June of 2021.

While this project does not propose a new business or create jobs, a reliable public safety community system is paramount to businesses wanting to expand or locate in Wakulla County. The county’s emergency responders such as law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency medical services and emergency operations are using an emergency communication system and devices (radios) that are aging, incompatible and inoperable with communication systems used by other federal, state and local public safety/first responder agencies.

Wakulla’s match would consist of \$1 million in up-front funds, plus funding of the maintenance program following the initial warranty period. That includes maintenance for the towers, the shelters, the equipment and associated software needed to operate the system. Wakulla County notes that these costs sum to \$6,523,861.

A 2019 study by the MITRE Corporation uses several alternative methods to assess the value of equipment delivered using FEMA funding. The present project shares some of those

characteristics. Subject matter experts assessed the monetary value of these investments when measured against standards of reduced risk of lives lost, of injuries, of time without necessities, or property damages, and of business losses, as well as quality of life. After weighting these categories, the study found an overall relative change in benefits of 5.4 percent from the model baseline in an application to 16 Florida counties, but that variance in the valuation of components driving this change was large and meant that a positive ROI could not be definitively associated with the FEMA spending. MITRE found similarly inconclusive results in applying revealed preference techniques and in applying breakeven analysis to examine the benefits to emergency preparedness spending.

Taken together, the enhanced emergency preparedness could be responsible for badly needed emergency communications capability in Wakulla County. The project is clearly eligible for funding under the provisions enacted by the Legislature. However, it is not possible to assign a direct job count to the project. For this reason, staff score this project as a “B.”

### **Project Summary (based on information provided by the applicant)**

Wakulla County is seeking up to \$11,038,669 in Triumph Gulf Coast funding for a new emergency communications system (system) to be used by Wakulla County Fire and Rescue (WCFR), Wakulla County Sheriff's Office (WCSO), Emergency Management Services, Wakulla County School District and Wakulla County Public Works. The grant funds will be used to purchase and install the system, train personnel and ensure it is operational. Wakulla County will provide the funds for maintenance of the system.

The existing emergency communications system is at risk of not meeting the demands of the current population and is not able to meet the demands of new or expanding businesses or individuals seeking to relocate to Wakulla. A new system will provide emergency and disaster response that can meet increased population and business growth as well as be upgraded when needed.

Due to the current antiquated emergency communication system, dense forest, lack of towers, and/or redundancy, calls can be dropped, or communication broken leaving a responding unit without communication with other responders or headquarters. This places responders, citizens and property at risk. The county's current first responder system is not encrypted. Sensitive information regarding a situation or individuals can be picked up or interfered with by anyone.

In a cross-jurisdictional situation, or mutual aid, situation Wakulla County first responders and law enforcement cannot communicate with federal, state or local responders due the incompatibility of the county's system. A new system will allow Wakulla County to communicate with other mutual aid partners in adjacent disproportionately affected counties so that they may provide or receive needed assistance during emergency situations.

Wakulla County is a state designated area of Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO). In 1990, the County's population was just over 14,000 residents and over the last thirty years the population has more than doubled with a 2020 population of 33,764. Wakulla County's population is projected to increase by 7.75% by 2025 for a total estimated population of 36,383. In 2000, the

county had an estimated 37.7 persons per square mile, and the 2020 report now shows an estimated 55.7 persons per square mile. (Source: Wakulla County Profile prepared by the Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, August 2021.)

Wakulla County is a bedroom community to Leon County with at least 60% of its residents commuting daily to Leon County for employment, medical needs, etc. The county also serves as a major transportation pass-through for those traveling to other coastal counties and beaches to the south and west. An estimated 70% of the county is comprised of local, state or national lands, forests and parks. A majority of the county's northern, western and eastern boundaries are bordered by either the Wakulla State Forest, the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (SMNWR) or the Apalachicola National Forest, and the southern, coastal boundary is bordered by the Apalachee, Ochlockonee and Levy bays. This leave only 30% (or less) of land area available for residential and business development.

Wakulla County is seeing steady growth. Residential development is increasing demands for county essential public safety services. According to the Wakulla County Planning and Community Development Office, there are 255 residential units currently under construction, 1242 units available for construction and another 4449 units under review. In general, the majority of the development is occurring within Crawfordville.

The Wakulla County Sheriff's Office and Wakulla County Fire Rescue track the number of calls to which they respond on an annual basis (FY October- September). Wakulla County's emergency responders have seen a 25% increase in calls over the past three fiscal years.

The US 319, and US 98, and SR 363 offer the only north-south bound highways in and out of Wakulla County from Leon County to Franklin County. These highways experience extremely heavy traffic and congestion during peak hours Monday-Friday due to residents traveling to and from Tallahassee where most of Wakulla's population works. During holidays and weekends, these same highways experience more severe congestion due not only to citizens using them for local commutes, but due to those traveling to the area and those passing through to neighboring panhandle counties and beaches. These factors make it even more critical that Wakulla County have a current, dependable emergency communication system.

During emergencies or disaster incidents the county's first responders, law enforcement, emergency management and other units work closely with the Florida Highway Patrol, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Florida Forest Service, United States Forest Service, SMNWR and other local public safety agencies. This is in part due to the fact that Wakulla covers an estimated 604 square dry miles and is the first responder for 911 calls or mutual aid, especially in the following areas:

- Coastline running from Jefferson County to Franklin County, and four major rivers: Ochlockonee, St. Marks, Wakulla and Sopchoppy; or approximately 129 square miles of water.
- Approximately 552 square miles of state forest/parks, national forest or SMNWR
- Approximately 165 miles of state- owned roads
- Approximately 781 miles of County-owned paved roads

- Approximately 241 miles of County-owned dirt roads
- An indeterminate number/miles of private roads
- Franklin, Liberty, Leon, Gadsden, Jefferson and Taylor counties are either contiguous or within close proximity to Wakulla County.

The county's emergency responders including law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency medical services and emergency operations are using an emergency communication system and devices (radios) that are aging, incompatible and inoperable with communication systems used by other federal, state and local public safety/first responder agencies. The system and devices currently being used are based on a microwave system installed in 2001. The county has purchased various radios and system upgrades in order to keep the system functional.

After the purchase of the various radios and system upgrades in 2004, Wakulla County entered into a maintenance agreement with MCA – Mobile Communications America (Motorola). Wakulla County maintained this agreement until 2019 when the current emergency management director reviewed the agreement and determined that most, if not all, of the current radio equipment was not covered under the agreement. The county paid \$125k to maintain the agreement during this period (2004-2019).

Also, in 2004, the FCC announced they would impose narrow banding on all public safety licensees using 25 kHz radio systems. The narrow banding would allow more users within the assigned channels for public safety (150-174 and 421-512). The mandate was effective January 1, 2013, and all licensees were to have equipment compatible with 12kHz channels. In 2009, the emergency management director at that time submitted an extensive document to the County Commissioners requesting appropriations to support the cost to upgrade the system to ensure compatibility when the FCC narrow banding occurred. No action was taken by the commissioners until 2014.

In August of 2014, Wakulla County Fire Rescue determined the FCC narrow banding created dead zones in several areas in Wakulla County specifically, St. Marks and the Panacea/Ochlockonee Bay area. Wakulla County purchased a new radio signal repeater to help boost the signal to cover the dead zones. The total cost for the repeater, a shed to house the repeater and installation was \$50,000.

In 2016, the County Commissioners approved the purchase of six (6) consoles for Wakulla County's E911 dispatch. The consoles were in dire need of replacement due to several incidents that led to loss of communications for E911 dispatch. The consoles have been covered by regular maintenance since purchased.

During the past twenty years, the radio system's slow deterioration and incompatibility was not forced to the County Commission's focus either by urging replacement of the system or a comprehensive upgrade. As the county developed its comprehensive plan and implemented the adopted infrastructure plan it was recognized that the system is headed for a catastrophic failure and since has been elevated to an urgent need.

In February 2021, Wakulla County entered into an “Continuing Services Contract” with TUSA Consulting LLC to evaluate the existing system, identify its vulnerabilities and assess the needs moving forward. TUSA’s assessment determined the radio system in its entirety has to be replaced. Options to upgrade the system were not viable as the equipment is either no longer serviceable, accessible for purchase, or compatible with the existing components.

During the assessment it was brought to the forefront that the county’s current radio system does not communicate with the Wakulla County School District radio system, nor the county’s Public Works system. Both the school district and Public Works play a vital role in the county under normal everyday circumstances as well as during a severe weather event or other disaster. Therefore, Wakulla County intends to work with both entities to incorporate all radio communications onto one system effectively creating a system that will allow all county agencies to communicate day to day and in times of emergencies.

In May 2021, TUSA submitted the needs assessment to the County Commission for review. The impacted users, County Administrator and other key staff carefully reviewed the document to fully understand each recommendation. On June 21st Wakulla County hosted a public workshop and TUSA provided the public a high-level review of the needs assessment and, in particular, the best options for the County Commission to consider. The recommendations ranged from a solo standing system to a shared system and costs ranged from \$13.4 million to \$17.3M.

In close conference with the end users and the County Administrator, and with technical feedback from TUSA, the County Commissioners decided to pursue funds to support the P25 Turnkey System as proposed by TUSA.

At this time, Wakulla County has released a request for proposals (RFP) to secure a contractor to install a new system and provide training for a P25 Turnkey emergency communications system.

Over the past seven years, Wakulla County has made multiple requests for state and federal funding assistance.

From 2015 through 2020, Wakulla County submitted legislative budget requests each legislative session for funds to support the cost of a countywide emergency communications system. The communications system was listed as the number one priority each year and the budget requests were submitted to both the Florida House and Senate. Wakulla County was not successful in receiving any funding to support the communications system.

In May of 2022, Wakulla staff reached out the DEO staff to apply for funds from the US Housing and Urban Development Mitigation General Infrastructure Program to address the emergency communications system, specifically in the Panacea area. While Panacea would satisfy the requirements for the funds, DEO Staff advised that the remainder of the area would not meet the requirements of Urgent Need National Objective as defined in HUD’s guidelines. DEO staff also noted the possibility of duplication of benefits under the federal Stafford Emergency Management Act. Based on the feedback from DEO’s staff, Wakulla County did not pursue DEO Mitigation General Infrastructure Program to help support the cost of the countywide emergency communications system.

In July of 2022, staff submitted a request for \$8.5 million in state funds through the Local Support Grant Request (Request Form #0813). At this time, there has been no notification of funding through this source.

The total cost of ownership for the emergency radio system is \$17,691,930. In addition to the initial system assessment and procurement support cost of \$129,400 there are three major components to the emergency communications system as noted below:

1. Infrastructure: This includes but is not limited to a primary and secondary core, towers, antenna systems, equipment shelters, permanent generators at each site, security fencing, project management, engineering and installation services. The total cost for the infrastructure is \$10,169,595.00.
2. Customer Subscribers: This category includes the equipment for essential personnel who will be using the new system, subscriber programming, and installation services. It includes mobile equipment to be mounted within county or school board vehicles, portable equipment that is worn on essential personnel such as EMS, law enforcement, fire rescue, and the control station (non-dispatch). The total cost for the customer subscribers is \$2,661,338.00.
3. System Maintenance: This portion of the system's cost will provide an extended maintenance period from years 4 through 15. The infrastructure and subscribers are both covered by this maintenance and will be supported by funds available from Wakulla County. The total cost is \$4,731,597.00.

This project is an allowable use of Triumph Gulf Coast funds pursuant to section 288.8017, (1)(d), FS, "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 disaster, such as plans created for the Coastal Impact Assistance Program. This project is included in the county's 2021, Local Mitigation Strategy Plan, Appendix 7, Project #54.

### Budget & Funding

Attached

**Exhibit B as of**

**Project Name and Number 48. Wakulla County Emergency Communications System**

Budget: up to \$11,038,669.00

Estimated Construction Start Date if applicable 5/1/23

Estimated Education component start date if applicable

|                      | Budget Category 1    | Budget Category 2 | Budget Category 3 | Budget Category 4 | Total                |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Project Total</b> |                      |                   |                   |                   |                      |
| Calendar Year 1      | 9,777,989.00         | -                 | -                 | -                 | 9,777,989.00         |
| Calendar Year 2      | 3,052,944.00         | -                 | -                 | -                 | 3,052,944.00         |
| Calendar Year 3      | -                    | -                 | -                 | -                 | -                    |
| Calendar Year 4      | 242,478.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 242,478.00           |
| Calendar Year 5      | 242,479.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 242,479.00           |
| Calendar Year 6      | 517,754.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 517,754.00           |
| Calendar Year 7      | 517,754.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 517,754.00           |
| Calendar Year 8      | 517,754.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 517,754.00           |
| Calendar Year 9      | 517,753.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 517,753.00           |
| Calendar Year 10     | 517,753.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 517,753.00           |
| Calendar Year 11     | 331,575.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 331,575.00           |
| Calendar Year 12     | 331,575.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 331,575.00           |
| Calendar Year 13     | 331,574.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 331,574.00           |
| Calendar Year 14     | 331,574.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 331,574.00           |
| Calendar Year 15     | 331,574.00           | -                 | -                 | -                 | 331,574.00           |
| <b>Project Total</b> | <b>17,562,530.00</b> | <b>-</b>          | <b>-</b>          | <b>-</b>          | <b>17,562,530.00</b> |

|                      |                      |          |          |          |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| <b>Triumph</b>       |                      |          |          |          |                      |
| Calendar Year 1      | 8,613,216.00         |          |          |          | 8,613,216.00         |
| Calendar Year 2      | 2,425,453.00         |          |          |          | 2,425,453.00         |
| Calendar Year 3      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 4      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 5      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 6      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 7      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 8      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 9      |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 10     |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 11     |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 12     |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 13     |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 14     |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| Calendar Year 15     |                      |          |          |          | -                    |
| <b>Triumph Total</b> | <b>11,038,669.00</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>11,038,669.00</b> |

|                      |              |  |  |  |              |
|----------------------|--------------|--|--|--|--------------|
| <b>Match Funding</b> |              |  |  |  |              |
| Calendar Year 1      | 1,164,773.00 |  |  |  | 1,164,773.00 |
| Calendar Year 2      | 627,491.00   |  |  |  | 627,491.00   |
| Calendar Year 3      | -            |  |  |  | -            |
| Calendar Year 4      | 242,478.00   |  |  |  | 242,478.00   |
| Calendar Year 5      | 242,479.00   |  |  |  | 242,479.00   |
| Calendar Year 6      | 517,754.00   |  |  |  | 517,754.00   |
| Calendar Year 7      | 517,754.00   |  |  |  | 517,754.00   |
| Calendar Year 8      | 517,754.00   |  |  |  | 517,754.00   |
| Calendar Year 9      | 517,753.00   |  |  |  | 517,753.00   |
| Calendar Year 10     | 517,753.00   |  |  |  | 517,753.00   |

|                      |                     |          |          |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------|----------|---------------------|
| Calendar Year 11     | 331,575.00          |          |          | 331,575.00          |
| Calendar Year 12     | 331,575.00          |          |          | 331,575.00          |
| Calendar Year 13     | 331,574.00          |          |          | 331,574.00          |
| Calendar Year 14     | 331,574.00          |          |          | 331,574.00          |
| Calendar Year 15     | 331,574.00          |          |          | 331,574.00          |
| <b>Grantee Total</b> | <b>6,523,861.00</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>6,523,861.00</b> |