

Meeting Minutes
Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.
Bay County Commission Chambers
840 West 11th Street
Panama City, Florida 32401
August 27, 2025 10:30 a.m. CT

Members Present:

Jay Trumbull, Sr., Chair
Bryan Corr, Sr.
David Humphreys, Vice-Chair
Charles Rigdon
Leslie Weiss, Treasurer

Chair Jay Trumbull, Sr. called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM CT. Ms. Susan Skelton, Executive Director, called roll and announced the presence of a quorum.

Chair Trumbull invited Mr. Duriel Crittenden, Director of the FSU ASCENT program, to present an overview of the initiative's impact and future direction. ASCENT is a 10-year, \$23 million Regional Workforce Initiative supported by Triumph Gulf Coast, focused on developing talent in cybersecurity and innovative technologies across eight coastal counties in Northwest Florida. The program blends K–12 STEM education, adult upskilling, industry-recognized certifications, and academic pathways at FSU Panama City.

Mr. Crittenden highlighted four key areas: youth STEM engagement, workforce certifications, teacher training, and community partnerships. Youth programming included hands-on camps and clubs where students built rockets, coded, and solved engineering challenges. The spring Tech Expo drew approximately 400 attendees and 60 volunteers, showcasing activities such as robotics and Minecraft scavenger hunts. Summer programs emphasized career exploration and digital credentialing, with notable partnerships in Escambia County (Kakua Institute), Franklin County (Moving Education Institute), and Walton County, where students gained foundational STEM skills.

Training topics included Google Workspace, Python, WordPress, and digital fluency. Special events such as the First LEGO League Exhibition and TRiO Rocket Camp further connected students and families to STEM pathways. The certification report showed strong progress: 127 certifications in Gulf, 113 in Bay, 20 in Escambia, and 10 in Franklin. Walton County's camp focused on skill-building, preparing 18 students for future credential opportunities. Certifications included Python, Cyber Citizen, Microsoft Word, TOSA, Adobe Illustrator, and WordPress—stacked to build both foundational and specialized skills.

Looking ahead, Mr. Crittenden introduced several initiatives. The Office of Professional Engagement and Learning (OPEL) is delivering micro-credentials with pathways to for-credit programs, including a current PMP course. At Walton County Correctional Institution, ASCENT launched an Entrepreneurship and Small Business program, graduating five participants with ESB certifications. The ASCENT Skills Academy, a reimaged homeschool initiative, now serves high

schoolers, recent graduates, and adults through mentorship and skill labs designed to support transitions into college and careers.

Mr. Crittenden concluded by recognizing the ASCENT team and their collaborative efforts with Dr. Suzanne Remedies, Brianne Biddle, and Holly Radican. He emphasized the importance of outcomes and personal stories over statistics and invited attendees to suggest additional organizations that could partner with ASCENT to expand its reach.

Ms. Carrie Meyers, Co-Director of STEM Outreach for FSU InSPIRE and the Learning Systems Institute, shared highlights from the program's first full year, emphasizing its mission to modernize teacher professional development through AI integration, STEM pedagogy, and strong industry collaboration. InSPIRE reached all eight partner counties this summer, with nearly 200 teachers participating in eight professional learning courses. These included AI-powered instruction and storytelling, a pilot robotics course, and an advanced AI engineering course now transitioning to a fully online format. The robotics course, described as a hands-on, pre-engineering experience, incorporated coding, literacy, and durable skills, and even engaged kindergarten teachers—an uncommon but exciting development for general education classrooms.

Rising Leaders Academy in Bay County became the first official "InSPIRE School," hosting sessions and committing to year-round collaboration. Returning facilitators, many of whom have taken multiple courses, helped lead sessions across counties, fostering cross-district collaboration. All courses are aligned with state standards and designed to equip teachers with both certifications and classroom-ready skills. InSPIRE's approach builds teacher capacity through a structured course pathway, ensuring foundational understanding in AI, STEM, and literacy, while promoting integration across subject areas.

Workforce development is embedded throughout the program, with guest experts, field visits to advanced manufacturing sites like Fort Walton Machining, and partnerships with Microsoft. Teachers learn to co-design educational content with AI, creating grade-level materials that reflect real-world innovations. The program has received local media attention, and teachers have independently promoted their experiences. Ms. Meyers emphasized the importance of preparing students for vital industries and sparking a movement across the Panhandle. Looking ahead, InSPIRE will continue offering online and in-person courses, support military family pathways, and participate in community events such as the Pensacola Air Show and Santa Rosa's STEAM Night. October's Advanced Manufacturing Month will also feature several InSPIRE-led initiatives. Ms. Meyers closed by thanking the board for their support and noted that while participation skewed slightly toward elementary teachers (60/40), secondary engagement—particularly from Escambia—was strong and growing.

On a motion by Mr. Charles Rigdon and seconded by Mrs. Leslie Weiss, the June 13, 2025, Meeting Minutes were approved without objection.

Treasurer's Report

Mrs. Jennifer Davidson, CPA, presented the June financial statements, noting that total assets stood at \$677 million as of June 30. The Statement of Activity reflected approximately \$15 million in grant disbursements for the month. The budget versus actual report showed Triumph over budget by about \$100 for June. Mrs. Davidson explained that this variance was due to timing of payments—specifically, Triumph paid construction consultant Randy Lewis for first-quarter

services in June and second-quarter services in July. While these months show slight overages, the organization remains under budget for the year overall. **Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the June Financial Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rigdon and approved without objection.**

Mrs. Davidson presented the July financial statements, noting that total assets stood at \$678 million as of July 31. The Statement of Activity by county showed \$1.6 million in grant disbursements for the month. Year-to-date figures reflected \$22.7 million in total grant disbursements for the year. The budget versus actual report for the month of July showed the organization was over budget by approximately \$1,000. However, the budget to actual year-to-date shows that administrative costs remain under budget by about \$46,000 for the year. **Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the July Financial Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bryan Corr and approved without objection.**

Mrs. Davidson presented updates to the Triumph Gulf Coast Systems Documentation, noting that all proposed changes had been previously approved by the Board and were now being formally incorporated into the document. Key updates include clarification that contract labor may be paid via direct deposit, inclusion of the board-approved motion regarding appropriation of interest cost language, and an increase in the credit card limit to \$7,000. The fund balance policy—already reflected in annual audits—was added for clarity and reference, given recent discussions. Additionally, three financial reports reviewed monthly by Mrs. Weiss were added to the documentation to ensure transparency.

Ms. Skelton explained that maintaining up-to-date systems documentation supports clear communication with the Auditor General and helps streamline audit processes.

Upon request, Mrs. Davidson provided an overview of the fund balance structure: restricted funds are dictated by external entities (e.g., state statutes and county allocations), committed/designated funds are determined by board action (e.g., interest set-asides and approved term sheets), and unassigned funds are available for future grants and not yet designated. She emphasized that restricted funds remain protected for each county and cannot be reallocated, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements and board directives.

Mrs. Davidson clarified that the purpose of the financial tracking system is to ensure that funds are being spent in alignment with both state guidelines and Board expectations. Mrs. Weiss added that restricted funds are allocated annually to each of the eight counties and are protected from reallocation, even in the event of a large project. Davidson confirmed that restricted funds cannot be influenced, and that only committed or designated funds are subject to Board discretion.

The Board acknowledged the clarity of the explanation and expressed appreciation for Mrs. Davidson's ongoing efforts to ensure financial transparency and compliance. **Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the System Documentation Draft as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rigdon and approved without objection. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Staff Report

Ms. Skelton introduced the audit team from the Auditor General's office, noting that their annual visit was underway. Members of the Board participated in interviews earlier that morning.

Ms. Skelton reported that the upcoming legislative session will begin on January 13, marking an early start this year. Committee meetings are expected to begin in the coming weeks. Staff will continue monitoring legislative activity and provide updates on any developments of interest.

Ms. Skelton reported that two Grant Compliance Specialist positions previously authorized by the Board have been filled. Mrs. Courtney Swayze of Port St. Joe and Mrs. Jillian Solberg of Crawfordville will join the compliance team under the direction of Mrs. Therese Baker, starting September 2. One of the hires replaces a former staff member who returned to teaching, while the other fills the remaining approved position. Both roles are part-time (up to 30 hours per week) and within the board-approved rate.

Ms. Skelton also recommended a mid-cycle pay adjustment for Mrs. Baker, citing a significant increase in workload and expanded responsibilities following the 18-month compliance milestone. She proposed increasing Mrs. Baker's annual salary from \$60,000 to \$70,000. **Mr. Rigdon made a motion to approve Mrs. Baker's pay adjustment as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Humphreys and approved without objection. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Chair Trumbull announced the appointment of the Performance Review Committee, which is required under the terms of Ms. Skelton's contract. Ms. Skelton noted that committee members must have worked with her for at least one year. Chair Trumbull appointed Mr. Humphreys, Mrs. Weiss, Mr. Corr, and himself to serve on the committee, with Mr. Rigdon attending for training purposes. Staff will coordinate arrangements for the committee to meet prior to the next Board Meeting in October.

Ms. Skelton addressed the Board regarding the recently approved 18-month in arrears requirement for grantees to submit documentation for reimbursement or match expenditures within 18 months of the expense date. She explained that the implementation of this rule led to a surge of delayed data submissions from various entities attempting to come into compliance. Recognizing that some organizations are significantly behind, staff proposed a six-month grace period to allow additional time for compliance.

Ms. Skelton noted that she had discussed this proposal individually with Board members and, based on those conversations, staff incorporated the grace period into two amendments appearing on the current agenda—specifically for Project 265 and 233. She clarified that if any Board member objected to the inclusion of the grace period, the amendments could be pulled from the consent agenda and moved to the regular agenda for further discussion. She emphasized that this approach was necessary to allow staff to begin drafting amendments while awaiting formal board consideration. No immediate action was required unless a Board member requested changes to the consent agenda.

Program Administrator's Report

Ms. Cori Henderson, Program Administrator, provided an overview of Triumph Gulf Coast's long-term economic development strategy, using the metaphor of a house to illustrate the layered approach. Early grants laid the "foundation" by investing in infrastructure projects such as the Port of Panama City's Eastern Terminal, Shoal River Ranch water and sewer lines, Whiting Aviation Park site readiness, and hangar construction at Pensacola Airport. These were followed by "walls"—workforce development initiatives that built skills and capacity across the region,

including digital tools for elementary students, unmanned systems training, FAA A&P certification, and skilled trades programs.

She noted that recent grants represent the “roof,” supporting competitive job creation projects that build on earlier investments. Examples include Point Blank Enterprises potentially hiring students from Wakulla’s Digital Tools program, Leonardo Helicopters employing A&P graduates, and Williams International’s Project OPAL at Shoal River Ranch, which benefited from Triumph’s initial site readiness support. Workforce pipelines for these projects are being strengthened through Triumph-funded programs at Okaloosa Technical College North and Seacoast High School in Walton County.

Ms. Henderson emphasized that many items on the current agenda, such as Project Clear Global Impact Products, are directly tied to earlier Triumph investments. She concluded by reminding the Board that economic development is a long-term effort requiring patience and continued investment in foundational and workforce-building initiatives to support future high-wage job creation across Northwest Florida.

Ms. Henderson reported that over \$3 billion in pre-application requests have been received to date. Of these, pre-applications 360 and 362 are recommended as statutorily eligible, while application 361 requires additional information. Additionally, over \$1.5 billion in formal application requests have been submitted. Two new applications were received since the last meeting: one from Gulf County School District and another from Franklin County’s Haney Aviation Academy A&P program—both are included on today’s agenda.

The agenda also included a comprehensive status update on all active projects. A construction report from Mr. Randy Lewis, AIA, Construction Advisor, and Mr. Harold Branch, Construction Advisor, highlights the number of projects currently under construction, as well as those in pre-construction review.

Staff approved a \$13,000 budget modification for Franklin School District and, with input from Dr. Frank Fuller, Education Advisor, approved a curriculum adjustment at Northwest Florida State College to include EKG technicians in the nursing program. Additionally, a \$2.1 million de-obligation was processed for Project Boomer, which relocated outside Wakulla County but is expected to retain its workforce.

A formal vote was requested to approve the construction report reviews. Mr. Lewis confirmed that all listed grants are progressing according to their contractual timelines.

Regarding workforce program reporting, Dr. Fuller proposed a new benchmark for evaluating education program progress. Going forward, programs will be considered “on track” if they meet at least 75% of their projected outcomes, providing a more objective measure than anecdotal feedback.

Mr. Corr raised a concern regarding Project 243, noting a lack of proper documentation from the grantee related to the hiring of the architect and project manager. Ms. Henderson confirmed that the project has not been approved to proceed with Triumph-funded construction until the required documentation is submitted. She explained that if the construction team determines the documentation does not meet statutory or agreement standards, the grantee may proceed using their own funds, which can be counted as match but will not be reimbursed by Triumph until the issue is resolved.

Mr. Corr made a motion to approve the Program Administrator's Report (which includes the Quarterly Reviews). The motion was seconded by Mrs. Weiss and approved without objection.

Economic Advisor's Report

Dr. Rick Harper, Economic Advisor, introduced a **Recommendation on Proposal #323 – University of West Florida – Institute for Industry Advancement and Analytics (IA)² – up to \$32,151,120** to support its “Research for Tomorrow” proposal. The project will expand and enhance UWF’s Institute for Analytics and Industry Advancement ((IA)²), the Center for Cybersecurity (CfC), and establish the new Center for Computational Intelligence (CCI). Triumph funds will be allocated towards capital improvement to UWF's research infrastructure, as well as hiring of research scientists, data analysts, software engineers, postdoctoral associates, and related staff.

UWF’s expanded research capacity will position the University and the region as a computational research and commercialization hub, attracting new federal, state, and industry grant funding that would not otherwise come to Northwest Florida. The project’s alignment with regionally targeted industries—cybersecurity, AI, advanced analytics, and computational sciences—is expected to provide robust industry partnerships, foster innovation, and enhance workforce readiness for the defense and private sectors. While UWF has a proven record of successfully attracting grant funds, especially due to its role in hosting the Florida Small Business Development State Director’s Office, this grant will grow and strengthen academic research partnerships, creating measurable economic impacts to the region.

Over the project’s first ten years, UWF commits to the creation of 101 net new high-skill sustainable jobs, directly supporting the expansion of the region’s research and technology workforce. Triumph funding is structured to taper over time, with long-term sustainability achieved through increased external grant and contract revenue and matching university investment. Based on UWF’s projections and staff analysis, the initiative is expected to generate substantial ongoing increases in regional personal income, with an ROI of approximately \$12.8 dollars in added personal income per dollar of Triumph. The transformative and lasting effect of the new UWF research and innovation focus will be to position the region as a competitive hub for advanced analytics, cybersecurity, and computational sciences. For these reasons, Triumph staff rate the project as an “A.”

Chair Trumbull inquired about the size of the building expansion associated with the \$21 million investment. Dr. Jaromy Kuhl, Provost at the University of West Florida, responded that the new building will be approximately 55,000 square feet. He noted that Computational Intelligence and the Center for Cybersecurity will occupy a little over half of the space, approximately 26,000 square feet. Dr. Kuhl clarified that this will be a brand-new facility, not an addition to an existing structure.

Dr. Kuhl presented a strategic proposal from the University of West Florida (UWF), describing it as a transformational initiative to position Northwest Florida as a national leader in advanced computing, cybersecurity, and data science. The proposal is led by UWF’s Institute for Analytics and Industry Advancement and the Center for Cybersecurity, both of which have a strong record of innovation and external funding. With support from Triumph Gulf Coast, UWF aims to expand infrastructure, hire key personnel, and scale commercialization efforts across high-growth sectors such as AI, predictive analytics, and computational biology.

The initiative includes the creation of a regional innovation cluster, a commercialization pipeline, and a high-wage workforce pipeline. Project goals include \$83 million in new grant revenue, \$14.5 million in non-grant research spending, 101 new high-wage jobs, and a hub for startups and spin-offs. Dr. Kuhl emphasized that the proposal is designed to become self-sustaining within five years through grants, contracts, and commercialization. He also highlighted partnerships with IHMC, hospital systems, and defense-related institutions. The long-term vision is to create a future-ready, innovation-driven economy that supports military, healthcare, and critical infrastructure sectors while benefiting disproportionately affected counties. Dr. Kuhl concluded by calling the proposal a once-in-a-generation opportunity and welcomed questions from the board.

Mr. Rigdon made a motion to direct staff to move to term sheet negotiations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Corr. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the report. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Next, Dr. Harper introduced a **Recommendation on Proposal #327 – Gulf County School District – Digital Technology Training – up to \$6,886,150** to support a comprehensive digital tools initiative from 2026 to 2034. With a goal of 6,000 industry certifications, the cost to Triumph per certification awarded is \$1,148. This cost aligns with the most competitive projects in the Triumph portfolio. While there is more uncertainty about wages because of the general nature of digital tools, use of the standard Triumph scoring rubric shows \$73 in additional household income per dollar of Triumph spend. The project is assigned an “A” score for economic impact, reflecting its high projected return on investment, ambitious scale, and potential for lasting benefits to a disproportionately affected rural community.

Chair Trumbull invited Ms. Melissa Hancock, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction & Curriculum at Gulf District Schools, to speak. Ms. Hancock expressed appreciation for the opportunity and highlighted Gulf County’s involvement in the FSU ASCENT and InSPIRE initiatives. She presented a proposal aimed at bridging the rural digital divide and preparing students from elementary through high school for success in a technology-driven economy. A district-wide technology survey revealed underutilized infrastructure, prompting efforts to secure funding—including a \$1.1 million Rural Utilities Service Distance Grant—and launch a strategic initiative to expand access and training. Gulf District Schools currently fall below the state average in industry certifications, with fewer than 10% of graduates earning credentials.

To address this, the district hired a dedicated CTE director and introduced seven new technology courses this semester. Two years ago, only one teacher out of 140 taught technology; now, nearly 40 teachers have received training. Ms. Hancock emphasized that the initiative is not only about technology, but also about long-term economic resilience. She noted that the district is committed to sustaining the effort beyond the funding period by empowering both teachers and students—some of whom return to the district as educators. In response to a question about how the board could help, Ms. Hancock explained that the process is systematic and ongoing, and support for the proposal would be a significant step forward.

Mrs. Weiss expressed strong support for the Gulf County proposal, noting that it represents a valuable opportunity for one of the region’s smaller, rural counties to receive much-needed funding. Ms. Hancock thanked the Board and shared a personal connection to the initiative, mentioning that her grandchildren are enrolled in the district. She emphasized the progress made in recent years, including the addition of technology teachers at each elementary school—an advancement from having no keyboarding classes just two years ago.

Ms. Skelton added that former Triumph Board member Mr. Matt Terry, now serving with the Gulf County School District, had intended to attend the meeting to voice his support but was unable due to an emergency. He conveyed to Ms. Skelton that he views the proposal as a monumental step forward for the county and wanted the Board to be aware of his endorsement.

Mrs. Weiss made a motion to direct staff to move to term sheet negotiations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rigdon. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the report. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Dr. Harper introduced a **Recommendation on Proposal #353 – Pensacola State College – Workforce Training Center – up to \$3,250,000** to establish the Workforce Development Training Center on PSC's main campus in Escambia County. Dr. Harper noted that Triumph is bearing 63.1% of the total cost, with the college bearing 36.9% of that cost. Triumph Gulf Coast funding will be invested primarily in the renovation of Building 21, a 22,686-square-foot facility formerly housing the Academic Computer Center, to create new classrooms, shop areas, training labs, and support facilities for non-credit and credit workforce programs. The Center intends to have flexible, employer-aligned programs ranging from HVAC and logistics to advanced manufacturing, IT, and health care technology.

Based on application updates (July 2025), PSC projects awarding a total of 970 industry-recognized certifications over the funded period, with Triumph's \$3,250,000 contribution equating to a cost per certification of \$3,351 yielding an expected \$24.9 in additional labor income per dollar of Triumph spending. This figure is competitive with prior Triumph workforce awards, particularly given the capital-intensive nature of the facility renewal and the breadth of industry-aligned certifications. For these reasons, Triumph staff score the project as an "A."

Chair Trumbull invited Dr. Ed Meadows, President at Pensacola State College, to speak. Dr. Meadows provided an update on the college's recent growth and upcoming initiatives. He reported that enrollment has increased by 43% over the past two years, creating a pressing need for additional classroom space. The college plans to utilize the vacated Academic Computer Center—made available due to the construction of the Cybersecurity Center and the Advanced Technology and Math Center—for non-credit workforce training. One of the key programs to be housed in this facility is Next Start, a continuously funded initiative that provides 6 to 8-week training programs for military personnel transitioning out of service, veterans, and their dependents, with the goal of preparing them for immediate employment. He acknowledged Dr. Douma's leadership and collaboration with staff over the past year in planning and developing this project. Dr. Meadows also noted that Pensacola State is expanding its corporate and continuing education efforts, with Ruthie Noel appointed to oversee industry training and nonprofit education programs.

Mr. Rigdon made a motion to direct staff to move to term sheet negotiations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Corr. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the report. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Next Dr. Harper introduced a **Recommendation on Proposal #339 – Tallahassee State College – Wakulla Workforce Development – up to \$10,008,326** to implement its Healthcare and Teacher Preparation Expansion initiative. The total project budget is \$27,609,099, with Triumph funds representing 36.2% of total costs; the College will contribute \$1,601,153 in grantee

funds and is in the process of securing an EDA Disaster Supplemental award of \$16,000,000. Staff recommend that if the Board votes favorably on the proposal, Triumph funding be made contingent upon receipt of the EDA award, as detailed in the budget template. This investment will expand healthcare and teacher preparation training, support acquisition of cutting-edge simulation technologies, and address critical skill gaps in Northwest Florida.

Given the population size of the several rural Triumph counties that are the target demographic, achieving 6,000 certifications implies either most students earning multiple credentials or a high percentage of eligible students earning a certification every year. The Triumph investment equates to a unit cost of \$2,790 per certification, placing this proposal within the typical cost range of high-impact Triumph-supported workforce programs. Staff rate this project “A” for economic impact, and project an increment to labor income of \$29.9 per Triumph dollar expended.

Chair Trumbull invited Ms. Shelly Bell, Vice President of Workforce Development at Tallahassee State College (TSC), to speak. Ms. Bell expressed gratitude to the Triumph Gulf Coast Board and staff for their support and consideration of TSC’s application. She presented the Wakulla Workforce Development (WWD) Facility proposal, describing it as a transformational investment that addresses two critical regional challenges: shortages in healthcare professionals and classroom teachers. Developed through extensive collaboration with local stakeholders—including Wakulla County, the Wakulla Chamber, the Apalachee Regional Planning Council, Wakulla EDC, Wakulla County School District, and our healthcare partners, including Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare and HCA Florida Capital Healthcare—the facility will offer cutting-edge training programs in phlebotomy, medical assisting, practical nursing, and a nursing bridge program, all supported by AR/VR simulation labs and industry-aligned certifications.

In addition to healthcare, the WWD facility will house a teacher preparation program offering bachelor’s degrees in elementary and exceptional education. A two-plus-two model with Wakulla High School will allow students to earn their AA while in high school and continue their education at the facility. Ms. Bell emphasized the dual focus on healthcare and education as key to regional economic diversification and long-term workforce sustainability. The project aligns with Triumph’s mission by promoting recovery and growth in disproportionately affected counties, particularly Wakulla and Franklin. Ms. Bell concluded by stating that the WWD facility will not only address immediate workforce shortages but also lay the foundation for lasting economic resilience and prosperity.

Mr. Rigdon inquired whether the additional \$16 million referenced in Tallahassee State College’s proposal was a federal or state grant. Dr. Harper confirmed it is a U.S. Economic Development Administration Disaster Recovery Grant. Mr. Rigdon asked if TSC could return to Triumph Gulf Coast for funding should the federal grant not be awarded. Dr. Harper responded that staff would be open to working with TSC on a revised proposal if needed. Mr. Rigdon emphasized the importance of supporting smaller, rural counties.

Ms. Bell expressed confidence in the grant’s approval, noting recent conversations with federal contacts and past successful collaborations in Wakulla County. Ms. Skelton added that Ms. Bell has a strong track record from her time at Lively Technical College and affirmed staff’s willingness to continue working with TSC if the grant is not awarded. Ms. Henderson noted Triumph’s history of successful partnerships with the EDA and expressed optimism based on prior experience.

Mrs. Weiss asked about the goal of 6,000 certifications and whether it was realistic. Ms. Bell confirmed the target, explaining that it includes multiple certifications across both healthcare and education tracks, and that she consulted with Brianne Biddle from the ASCENT program to

validate the numbers. Mrs. Weiss also voiced strong support for the proposal, citing the natural pipeline between Wakulla County's "A" schools and TSC, and praised the initiative's alignment with community needs.

Mrs. Weiss made a motion to direct staff to move to term sheet negotiations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rigdon. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the report. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Dr. Harper introduced a **Recommendation on Proposal #360 – Franklin Board of County Commissioners – Haney Aviation Academy – up to \$250,000** to establish an aviation maintenance educational program at Hangar 5, Apalachicola Regional Airport. The total project cost is anticipated at \$265,000, with Triumph providing approximately 79% of the required funds, and Franklin County committing \$15,000 in local match, including funds for facility capital improvements. Haney Technical College will also contribute substantially through hiring instructors and supplying instructional materials, further enhancing the project's leveraged impact. However, we do not have a specified dollar value for that contribution from Haney Technical College at this time. Triumph Gulf Coast funds will be allocated to essential facility improvements to ensure the site is suitable for high-quality technical education. Those renovations include demolition of interior walls, replacing flooring, repainting the interior, upgrading building systems such as HVAC, and improvements to the building exterior.

The program commits to certifying 25 new Airframe & Powerplant (A&P) mechanics within five years. With Triumph contributing \$250,000 toward the facility refurbishment, the cost per certification to Triumph Gulf Coast is \$10,000. Because of the large number of seat hours needed per student (and the associated instructional cost) and the relatively high wages associated with this credential, this is an attractive cost per cert. This investment in each new certification enables both immediate access to high-wage careers and the long-term economic resilience of Franklin County. The expected ROI is \$25.1 in increased labor income per Triumph dollar. For these reasons, and given the project's regionally significant, transformative impact, staff score this program as an "A" in terms of economic impact.

Mr. Steve Kirschenbaum, Airport Manager for Apalachicola in Franklin County, presented the proposal alongside Angela Reese, Administrator for Haney Technical College, and County Commissioner Otis Amison. Mr. Kirschenbaum described the initiative as a pivotal moment for Franklin County, which has faced significant challenges in recent years, including a five-year bay closure, job losses, wildfires, Hurricane Michael, and COVID-19. He emphasized the airport's emerging role as the county's second-largest employer and praised the current commission's proactive leadership. In the past two and a half years, the airport has undergone major improvements, including runway upgrades, new equipment, and partnerships with Tyndall Air Force Base.

The proposal centers on developing a skilled workforce to attract aviation-related companies to the region. Mr. Kirschenbaum credited the Airport Board Chair, Mr. George Wilkerson, for initiating discussions with Haney Technical College, which led to the current partnership. He expressed optimism about future expansions, including runway extensions and additional facilities, and noted that this workforce development program will serve as a foundation for attracting new businesses.

Ms. Reese shared Haney's commitment to the project, explaining that the college will contribute approximately \$450,000 in resources, including instructors, equipment, administrative oversight,

and accreditation. She highlighted Haney's existing dual enrollment partnerships with Gulf and Franklin counties and described the "Tango Flight" program at the local high school, where students build an airworthy aircraft from the ground up. The new aviation program will serve as a continuation of that pathway, allowing students to earn general certifications and transition into Haney's power plant program. Ms. Reese also expressed interest in expanding into marine and construction industries to serve the broader Northwest Florida region.

Commissioner Amison echoed the enthusiasm, noting strong community support and growing public interest in the program. He described the airport as a "blank canvas" with significant potential and expressed hope for future vocational expansions. He also acknowledged Ms. Reese's broader contributions and highlighted his own involvement in oyster industry revitalization efforts, which have been supported by Triumph and are helping move toward reopening the bay.

Mrs. Weiss responded positively, noting the airport's potential and referencing a previous site visit and air show. Ms. Skelton praised Commissioner Amison's leadership in both aviation and oyster industry initiatives.

Mrs. Weiss made a motion to direct staff to move to term sheet negotiations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Corr. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the report. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Mr. Corr asked whether there is a statutory sunset provision for the Triumph Board, referencing prior discussions and expressing concern about approving long-term projects without clarity on the Board's duration. Ms. Skelton responded that there is no statutory sunset for the Board. While the current funding is scheduled to end in 2033, there is no formal closure date for the Board itself. Any decision to dissolve or sunset the Board would need to come from the Legislature, which has not taken such action to date.

Legal Report

Consent Agenda

Chair Trumbull asked if any member of the public wished to speak on any of the items listed in the Consent Agenda. He then asked Board members if anyone had any concerns or issues with the Consent Agenda items, and seeing none, Mrs. Megan Fry, Legal Counsel, proceeded to present the items.

She first introduced the **Proposed Fourth Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #209 – Santa Rosa Board of County Commissioners – I-10 Industrial Park**. This amendment involves no additional funds and seeks to extend the project construction deadline to December 31, 2026, and the grant deadline to December 31, 2031, aligning with prior Board-approved budget amendments.

Next, Mrs. Fry presented the **Proposed Third Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #251 – Santa Rosa Board of County Commissioners – Milton Interchange Park**. Similarly, this amendment includes no additional funds and extends the construction deadline to September 30, 2026, and the grant deadline to December 31, 2031, to conform with previous Board actions.

Mrs. Fry introduced the **Proposed Second Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #265 – Florida State University – Panama City - FSU Collegiate School**. This amendment does not request additional funds but updates budget categories, adjusts the timing of grant and matching expenditures, and includes a one-time six-month waiver from the 18-month expenditure submission deadline.

Mr. Rigdon made a motion to approve items on the Consent Agenda and Mrs. Weiss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)

Regular Agenda

Mrs. Fry introduced **Proposed Grant Award Agreement for Proposal #344 – Bay County Board of Commissioners – Project Clear – up to \$3,750,000** for the renovation of property and equipment to support the operations of Global Impact Products. The proposed grant award agreement is consistent with the previously approved term sheet.

Chair Trumbull invited Ms. Becca Hardin, President and CEO of the Bay County Economic Development Alliance, to speak. Before Ms. Hardin began to speak Ms. Skelton expressed her appreciation to Becca for her contributions and support during the recent Florida Trend photograph session, thanking her for all the work she did to assist with the effort. Ms. Hardin presented the proposal for Global Impact Products, a company specializing in hurricane-resistant windows and doors. The company plans to lease the former incinerator property in Bay County's original industrial park off Highway 231 and will use Triumph Gulf Coast funds to retrofit the facility. Additional improvements and expansion will be funded by the company, which is expected to create 150 new jobs and invest \$14.5 million in capital.

Ms. Hardin highlighted the company's existing relationship with Port Panama City, where it imports glass from Merida, Yucatán. She noted that the lease agreement is being finalized with the county attorney, and the company has already hired an architect and construction manager to begin the design and bidding process. She expressed appreciation for the Board and staff support of the project.

Ms. Skelton noted for the record that Mr. Humphreys would abstain from voting on this item.

Mr. Rigdon made a motion to approve the Grant Award Agreement and Mr. Corr seconded the motion. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the proposal. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed on a roll call vote (4-0; Humphreys abstained.)**

Mrs. Fry then introduced **Proposed Grant Award Agreement for Proposal #355 – Florida's Great Northwest – United Forward Strategic Plan Update and Marketing Project – up to \$4,777,000** to support a research and marketing plan targeted at economic and industry diversification within the affected counties. Mrs. Fry noted that the proposed grant award agreement is consistent with the previously approved term sheet.

Chair Trumbull invited Ms. Jennifer Conoley, President of Florida's Great Northwest, to speak on behalf of the project. Ms. Conoley described the United Forward grant proposal as the most extensive and strategically focused marketing effort for economic development in Northwest Florida to date. Building on the success of their current marketing and research grant, the new initiative will continue promoting Triumph Gulf Coast success stories and analyzing the educational and workforce impacts of Triumph's investments across the region.

Referencing Cori Henderson’s “house” analogy, Ms. Conoley likened Florida’s Great Northwest to the realtors hosting open houses—actively marketing the region to attract new businesses and support economic diversification. The grant will also fulfill the board’s request to update the regional strategy for economic transformation, Northwest Florida Forward, extending its vision through 2030. The organization expressed enthusiasm for continued collaboration with local partners and appreciation for the board’s ongoing support.

Mr. Rigdon made a motion to approve the Grant Award Agreement and Mr. Humphreys seconded the motion. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the proposal. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Mrs. Fry introduced a **Proposed Fifth Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #233 – IHMC – Center for Human Healthspan – Resilience and Performance – NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS**, to update budget categories, request a one-time 6-month waiver from the 18-month expenditure submission deadline, and add a new to Triumph use of funds for commercialization of research.

Mr. Ryan Tilley, Director of Strategic Program Execution and Innovation at IHMC, spoke on behalf of the project. Mr. Tilley requested the creation of a contract professional services category within IHMC’s existing Triumph-funded projects to allow flexibility in engaging consultants with specialized expertise in commercialization. While IHMC’s Triumph-funded projects have generated significant scientific and technical advances, successfully transitioning these outcomes into real-world products and economic impact requires specialized skills in market analysis, business development, intellectual property strategy, and industry engagement. Mr. Tilley expressed appreciation for the board’s continued collaboration and support and welcomed any questions.

Mrs. Weiss inquired about the nature of the professional services listed under the “commercialization” category, noting uncertainty about its purpose. Mr. Tilley explained that the category pertains to technology transfer, specifically efforts to move intellectual property developed through research into the commercial sector. He noted that this represents a specialized skill set not currently available within the Institute. Mr. Rigdon asked whether the university or the Institute receives royalties when such intellectual property is sold into the public sector. Mr. Tilley confirmed that they do and explained that there are a few different models for how royalties are structured.

Mr. Rigdon made a motion to approve the Fifth Amendment to Grant Award Agreement and Mr. Corr seconded the motion. Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the proposal. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (5-0.)**

Public Comment

Chair Trumbull asked if anyone from the public would like to speak about any items related to Triumph process, policies, and practices. Seeing none, the Board proceeded to closing remarks.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Rigdon commended the Board’s work and expressed encouragement at seeing increased engagement from smaller, disproportionately affected counties such as Gulf, Franklin, and

Wakulla. He noted that limited local resources and lack of dedicated economic development personnel often hinder these counties from accessing available funding. He proposed that Triumph consider funding economic development director positions for a fixed term, with oversight to ensure qualified hires, as a way to empower these communities to attract investment and promote growth.

Ms. Skelton responded that this challenge has been a long-standing issue for Triumph and emphasized that each small county has unique needs and limitations. While most counties have some form of economic development infrastructure, Franklin County has only recently begun organizing efforts through local leaders like Mr. Amison and representatives from the airport. She explained that smaller counties often face barriers such as limited access to intermodal transportation and differing economic priorities compared to larger counties. Ms. Skelton noted that the legislative delegation is preparing a local bill to improve intermodal connectivity for Gulf, Franklin, Liberty, and Gadsden counties—two of which are outside Triumph’s region, but part of a broader inter-local system previously developed with EFI.

She stressed that Triumph continues to meet regularly with small counties and works closely with Opportunity Florida and rural economic development teams to identify viable strategies. While hiring economic development staff is one approach, she cautioned that success depends on local buy-in and leadership. Triumph cannot dictate a county’s direction; rather, counties must define their own goals and identity. Ms. Skelton expressed excitement about Franklin County’s recent engagement and highlighted Gulf County’s growing education initiatives, particularly its proximity to Tyndall and potential for defense-related job growth. She reiterated that Triumph remains committed to supporting these counties but emphasized that solutions must be collaborative and community driven.

Mr. Rigdon added that communities must be marketed effectively to attract interest, quoting Coach Bryant: “You’ve got to sell them on the campus before you can get them in class.” Ms. Skelton responded that community buy-in is essential and cannot be forced, reinforcing the importance of ongoing dialogue between Triumph and local stakeholders.

Mrs. Weiss echoed the importance of supporting small counties and offered to meet with any interested local governments. She highlighted past engagement with Franklin and Wakulla counties and praised their proactive leadership. She also noted the potential of Franklin County’s airport and its location within the “Golden Circle” near Tyndall, suggesting strong opportunities for defense-related economic development. Mrs. Weiss expressed enthusiasm for the participation of three small counties in the current meeting and reaffirmed her commitment to continued collaboration.

Chair Trumbull noted that the fact that they are having the conversation helps. The takeaway is they need to continue to find ways to get those counties engaged.

Ms. Skelton agreed and reiterated that while most counties in the region have some form of economic development infrastructure—Wakulla by contract and Gulf County through Jim McKnight, who was present at the meeting—Franklin County remains the only one without a dedicated economic development component. She noted that Franklin has discussed the idea but has not yet followed through. Ms. Skelton emphasized that each county has different capacities and priorities, and that Triumph continues to meet regularly with small counties and rural development partners to support their efforts.

Mr. Corr pointed out the irony that Franklin County, which was among the hardest hit by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, has received relatively little funding. He asked whether Triumph could support infrastructure projects like the Apalachicola water system. Ms. Henderson clarified that Triumph could fund water and sewer infrastructure if it is tied to industrial sites that create high-wage jobs. Ms. Skelton added that Triumph had encouraged Franklin County to extend water and sewer lines to the airport to unlock broader development opportunities, but the county has not yet acted on that recommendation.

Ms. Skelton also shared that the local legislative delegation—Representative Shoaf and Senator Simon—plans to file a bill to transfer control of Apalachicola’s water system to the East Point Water and Sewer District, which has a stronger operational track record. The new district would include East Point, St. George Island, and Apalachicola. She noted that the city’s longstanding issues with water infrastructure severely impacted the summer tourist season, and the state is now stepping in to address the problem.

Chair Trumbull expressed appreciation for the FSU ASCENT and InSPIRE presentations and enthusiasm for the increased engagement from Gulf, Franklin, and Wakulla counties. He thanked everyone for their participation and noted the Board had made significant funding decisions during the meeting.

Mrs. Weiss raised a forward-looking suggestion to explore the use of AI in compliance processes, noting the potential to automate document review and reduce administrative burden. Ms. Skelton responded that Triumph had begun preliminary testing over the summer and is consulting with an expert recommended by Jennifer Davidson. The goal is to maintain the Board’s directive of 100% review while improving efficiency. Ms. Henderson added that their intern had also begun exploring AI tools for this purpose, and the team is optimistic about future applications.

Mr. Humphreys echoed support for the ASCENT and InSPIRE programs and emphasized the importance of equipping teachers with AI knowledge to keep pace with students. He also supported Mr. Rigdon’s idea of boosting economic development in smaller counties and suggested exploring collaboration with Florida’s Great Northwest and leaders like Jennifer Connelly to help promote and support underserved areas.

Ms. Skelton concluded with an announcement that the next Board Meeting will be held on October 22nd at Northwest Florida State College at 10:30 AM, where the nursing program will be highlighted.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.