

Application Score Sheet

Proposed Project: City of DeFuniak Springs, DeFuniak Springs Airport (#284)
Proposed Project/Program County: Walton
Board of County Commission Support:
Rural County: Yes
Opportunity Zone:

Total Projected Project Cost: \$12,875,000
Match Provided: \$8,646,000
Triumph Funds Requested: \$4,229,000
Triumph Funds Recommended by Staff: \$4,229,000

Score: A

ROI: \$21.1 in additional personal income per Triumph Gulf Coast dollar

Economic Analysis, Impact and Score

The City of DeFuniak Springs has applied for funding of up to \$4,229,000 from Triumph Gulf Coast to be used for eligible improvement to 54J, the DeFuniak Springs Airport, including three new hangars and an access road, to enable it to recruit and retain high-wage jobs that are needed in the City. This complements existing funding that the City has secured to improve this vital asset, including over \$9 million for construction of the new terminal, nearly \$11 million for widening and lengthening of the east/west runway, \$1.1 million for apron improvements and \$1 million for part of a taxiway and access element from the state. There is over \$2.5 million in the FDOT workplan for this project.

The current proposal budget notes that the Grantee is providing \$1,262,000 in support of design and engineering, and that other match dollars in the amount of \$5,489,550 will be dedicated to construction over a 2-year period beginning in 2026. The proposed TGC contribution thus represents 38.5 percent of total budgeted project expenditures. Triumph staff recommends a performance metric of the creation and maintenance of 100 jobs at the airport paying an average of at least 115 percent of the prevailing average wage, for an average cost per job to Triumph of \$42,290.

The company or companies that will create these jobs are not yet known. TGC will have language in the Agreement allowing Triumph to approve or disapprove companies/jobs submitted for the metrics. As per normal, jobs created must meet not only the wage requirement of 115 percent, but must also be engaged in production of goods or services in one of Florida's targeted industry sectors, and 51 percent or more (as measured by revenue generated) will be sold outside the Triumph region. It is expected that the Agreement will specify a normal job ramp-up period of 3 to 4 years following completion in 2027 of the necessary infrastructure improvements, along with a minimum job maintenance period of three years. The Triumph Board, however, may wish to allow a longer job ramp-up period given that the companies are not

yet identified, and given the particularly pressing need to make transformative awards in Walton County.

For a job guarantee of 100 jobs and an award amount of up to \$4,229,000, the cost per direct job to Triumph Gulf Coast is \$42,290. This is a relatively high cost per job for companies yet to be identified, but the project will ideally result in substantial employment growth in the critical aviation and aerospace sector.

It is expected that the increment to personal income in the region will yield \$21.1 in additional personal income per Triumph Gulf Coast dollar requested.

For these reasons, staff score this program as an “A.”

Project Summary (based on information provided by the applicant)

The City of DeFuniak Springs is requesting a \$4,229,000 grant toward the construction of three new hangars and an access road at the City’s DeFuniak Springs Airport, also known as 54J. The hangars will be for Florida Target Industry Sector jobs paying at least 115% of the average wage in Walton County, a state designated Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO). The hangars will include two 6,400 sq ft and one 10,000 sq ft buildings and the new access road will provide access to the hangars.

The Florida Job Growth Grant Fund, state legislative appropriations, FDOT workplan, Federal appropriations and Federal grant funding sources are being used as match in the project and for additional airport infrastructure upgrades including taxiways, construction of a new terminal, and the lengthening and widening of runway 9-27.

The airport’s geographic location, future runway length, and available real estate are conducive to job creation. Adding city-owned hangar space will increase the Airport’s competitiveness when competing for new company new locations and expansions. The City seeks to recruit companies in areas of the aviation industry that include Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Advanced Air Mobility, Original Equipment Manufacturers, and Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul.

Key competitive advantages of the DeFuniak Springs Airport include open air space and being close to other airports while providing comparatively greater runway accessibility. Nearby commercial airports include Panama City Airport (ECP), Destin-Fort Walton Airport (VPS), and Pensacola International Airport (PNS). DeFuniak Springs is desirable to aviation and aerospace companies that wish to serve these larger airports and capitalize on the Panhandle’s growing aerospace industry, while still having room for growth and frequent runway access unhindered by commercial aviation traffic.

Budget and Funding

See attached

Letters of Support

Shane Abbott, Florida House of Representative, District 5

Walton County Board of County Commissioners

Walton County School District

Walton County Economic Development Alliance

Walton Area Chamber of Commerce

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Florida's Great Northwest

Space Florida

Censys Technologies Corporation

Unmanned Safety Institute

Neal Dunn, United States House of Representatives, 2nd Congressional District of Florida

Parrott, Inc.

Project # 284, DeFuniak Airport Phase 1 (Construction of Hangars, Access Road)

Budget \$ 10,980,550.00
 Estimated construction start date if applicable 4/1/26
 Estimated education component start date if appli N/A

	Design & Engineering	Construction	Total
Project Total			
2025	1,262,000.00	-	1,262,000.00
2026	-	4,859,275.00	4,859,275.00
2027	-	4,859,275.00	4,859,275.00
2028	-	-	-
2029	-	-	-
2030	-	-	-
Project Total	1,262,000.00	9,718,550.00	10,980,550.00
Triumph			
2025			-
2026		2,114,500.00	2,114,500.00
2027		2,114,500.00	2,114,500.00
2028			-
2029			-
2030			-
2031			-
Triumph Total	-	4,229,000.00	4,229,000.00
Grantee			
2025	1,262,000.00		1,262,000.00
2026			-
2027			-
2028			-
2029			-
2030			-
2031			-
Grantee Total	1,262,000.00	-	1,262,000.00
Match Source 1			
2025			-
2026		2,744,775.00	2,744,775.00
2027		2,744,775.00	2,744,775.00
2028			-
2029			-
2030			-
2031			-
Match Source 1 Total	-	5,489,550.00	5,489,550.00