



**JUNE
2026**

Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund

PROGRAM MANUAL

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MOSTF mission is to provide a funding source to preserve and enhance Mississippi's natural resources and the recreation it provides; through sustainable management and protection of wildlife and fisheries and their habitats, improving access to public lands and waterways, improving and promoting nature-based outdoor recreation, protecting cultural sites and archeological and historic resources, providing and recruiting outdoor activities, protection of land around military installations, restoration and enhancement of working agricultural lands, and supporting economic development.



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Section 1: OVERVIEW and ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Program Overview

What is the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund (MOSTF)?

The Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund (MOSTF) was created by the Mississippi Legislature in 2022 by passing the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act (Miss. Code Ann. § 49-39-5) The Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act (2022 Regular Session) was passed to establish a funding mechanism to encourage investment in outdoor recreation and conservation projects to state agencies with responsibilities therefor, and to expand the availability of these projects to counties, municipalities and nongovernmental entities, as defined by the Act.

The purpose of the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund is to provide support to state parks and trails; to support local parks and trails of state and regional significance; to provide stewardship of conservation land; and to acquire critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, or fishing, for military installation buffering or for natural resource-based outdoor recreation.

Funding for MOSTF

The 2022 Mississippi Legislature approved \$10 million for the MOSTF's initial year of implementation. The Mississippi Legislature approved an additional \$15 million in 2023, \$12 million in 2024, and \$12 million in 2025.

What are qualifications for approved projects?

Subject to the provisions of Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act, monies in the special fund may be used and expended by the board to provide funds for grants to counties, municipalities, state agencies and nongovernmental entities for:

1. Improvement of state park outdoor recreation features and trails;
2. Acquisition and improvement of parks and trails by counties and municipalities, if such parks and trails lie within the jurisdiction of such counties and municipalities;
3. Restoration or enhancement projects to create or improve access to public waters and lands for public outdoor recreation, conservation education, or the safe use and enjoyment of permanently protected conservation land;
4. Restoration or enhancement on privately owned working agricultural lands and forests that support conservation of soil, water, habitat of fish and wildlife resources;
5. Restoration or enhancement of wetlands, native forests, native grasslands and other unique habitats important for Mississippi's fish and wildlife; and

6. Acquisition of critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, fishing, military installation buffering or natural resource-based outdoor recreation. Real property may only be acquired under this subparagraph (vi) when the property:
 - a. Is, at the time of acquisition, being leased by the state as a wildlife management area;
 - b. Adjoins or is in close proximity to state or federal wildlife management areas or state parks, or would provide better public access to such areas;
 - c. Is identified in a wildlife action plan developed by a state agency;
 - d. Constitutes riparian lands, and its acquisition is for the purpose of protecting any drinking water supply; or
 - e. Surrounds a military base or military installation.

What types of projects are a priority to MOSTF?

- Projects that support public recreation and conservation efforts of state agencies, counties, and municipalities.
- Projects that leverage or match other nonfederal or federal funds available for similar purposes.
- Projects supporting and promoting recreation in the form of archery, boating, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, running, jogging, biking, walking, shooting, or similar outdoor activities.
- Projects contributing to the improvement of the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater.
- Projects contributing to the conservation of soil, water, and fish and wildlife resources on privately owned working agricultural lands or forests and public lands.
- Projects that improve access to public water and public lands.
- Projects that protect cultural and archeological important sites or military installations.

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a source of information and guidance for prospective applicants in securing program funding. It details important program fundamentals and goals, while also providing instruction on how to apply for the various project types authorized under the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act (2022).

Note: This booklet does not contain all materials and forms needed to apply for MOSTF assistance. Applicants should visit the MOSTF Homepage to access all current application materials and forms. These can be accessed at <https://www.dfa.ms.gov/most>

1.2: MOSTF Administration

MOSTF Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund is the body statutorily charged with evaluating and awarding funding for eligible project applications. The Board of Trustees, in coordination with MOSTF Staff shall evaluate the proposals in accordance with priorities established by the Board of Trustees and the Outdoor Stewardship Act of 2022.

The MOSTF Board of Trustees consists of the following members:

VOTING MEMBERS

- Four members appointed by the Governor, from geographically diverse areas; and
- Three members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, from geographically diverse areas.

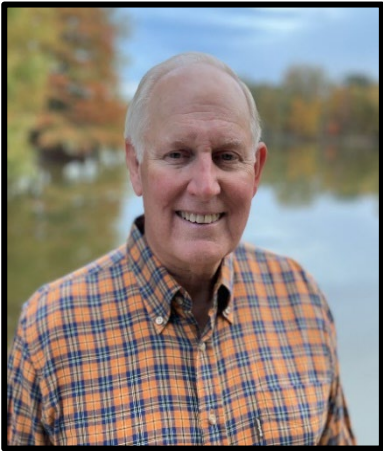
NON-VOTING EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

- The Executive Director of the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission;
- The Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources;
- The Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks;
- The Secretary of State;
- The Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce;
- The Chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees;
- The Chairs of the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee; and
- The Chairs of the Senate and House Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committees.

MOSTF BOARD of TRUSTEES



David Holman, Chairman
Bay St. Louis



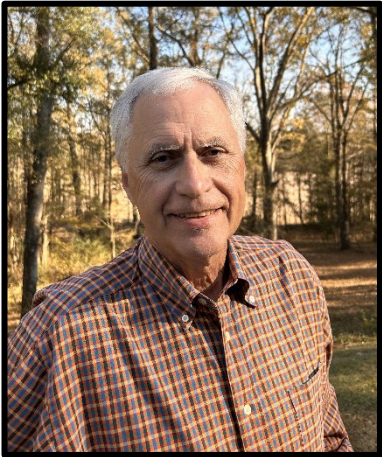
Mat Lipscomb, Vice Chairman
Desoto County



Allison Crews
Trustee
Canton



Payton Lockey
Trustee
Madison



Van Ray
Trustee
Pontotoc



Rick Webster
Trustee
Madison



Josh Raggio
Trustee

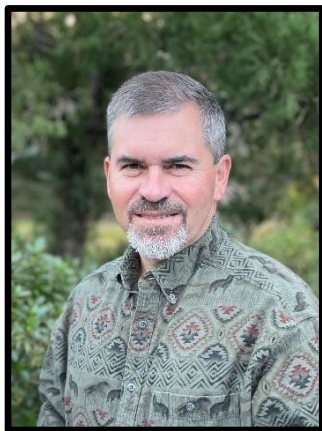
MOSTF Staff

The MOSTF is administered by an Executive Director and a Program Specialist who are employed and supported within the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration and physically located within the Woolfolk State Building on the 13th Floor.

Contact Information

To better serve Mississippi residents in attaining their recreation and conservation goals, the MOSTF team is available by the following means during normal business hours.

All general information or procedural inquiries should be made to the MOSTF Email ms-outdoor-steward-trust@dfa.ms.gov



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Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund

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<https://www.dfa.ms.gov/most>

ms-outdoor-steward-trust@dfa.ms.gov

1.3 Application Process

Who is Eligible to Apply

- State agencies
- Counties
- Municipalities and local governing authorities
- Nongovernmental organizations
- Private landowners in coordination with non-governmental organizations
- Charitable organizations registered with the Secretary of State's Office.

How to Apply

Prospective projects will undergo a web-based, competitive application process submitted to MOSTF, during open application periods. All applications must be submitted via the online electronic submission portal on the MOSTF website. Hard copy applications will not be accepted. Upon submission of the application an automated email confirmation will be sent to the primary contact. Incomplete applications will not be accepted for review by the Board.

When to Apply

Application acceptance periods are announced on the MOSTF Webpage at least 30-days in advance. Applications generally will be accepted for a period of 30-45 days once each year in the months of August and September when funding is available. Additional application periods may be set by the Board as needed.

Application Scoring and Ranking

Upon receipt, the MOSTF staff will evaluate each application, forward all eligible applications to the MOSTF Board for scoring. Scores of each project will be averaged and ranked by the MOSTF staff and presented to the MOSTF Board. The Board shall make all funding decisions. Funding decisions will be based upon the provided application information, scoring rank, and recommendations of the MOSTF staff. Applicants are notified whether their projects will be funded.

Scoring Criteria

All applications will be scored based upon the criteria below to best determine how well the project proposal meets the intended purpose of the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act. In determining the score, desired priority criteria will be weighted appropriately. The Application Scoring Criteria listed below is included here as an aid to applicants in addressing key issues in developing their application. While the Board scores each application using these criteria, the Board is not restricted to only the criteria listed below and may use other determining factors in making funding decisions.

	MOSTF Application Scoring Criteria	Max. Points	Points Scored
1	Matching fund(s) source and commitments are confirmed. (based upon percentage of request)	70	
2	Matching commitments are from non-state and/or federal source(s) (based upon percentage of request)	30	
3	The project narrative adequately identifies the goals and needs are adequately identified in a formalized planning document.	30	
4	The project potentially directly benefits a significant number of people OR provides opportunities for a user group with very limited natural resource recreational opportunities.	25	
5	Provides protection of wetlands/marshlands or stream buffers, with minimization of impacts from improvements and management activities.	10	
6	Provides restoration of streambanks and natural hydrologic processes.	10	
7	Provides protection or restoration of vegetated buffers or habitats in a condition appropriate for the region.	10	
8	Provides use of green infrastructure (e.g., bioretention areas, grass swales, and trails constructed with mulch, gravel, or other pervious materials rather than concrete or asphalt).	10	
9	Provides acquisition or stewardship of land with cultural or historical value.	10	
10	The project provides acquisition of or provides stewardship of land or water with significant ecological, conservation, restoration, or natural resource sustainability value.	25	
11	There is a written narrative or plan/budget to maintain, manage, and secure the property for multiple years of commitment beyond project completion date.	15	
12	Provides a methodology for maintaining, managing, and keeping property secure from vandalism, loitering, and crime.	10	
13	The project provides opportunities to enhance the regional and/or statewide economy OR has regional significance.	20	
14	The project restores or enhances wetlands, native forests, native grasslands, or other unique habitats important to native fish and wildlife OR restores or enhances critical areas for the provision of clean water, wildlife, hunting, fishing, military installation buffering, or natural resource-based outdoor recreation	25	
15	Provides additional access to public lands or public waters OR provides new public access to public waters that currently are not available.	25	
16	Provides stewardship of natural resources (e.g., promote effective conservation and sustainable practices, protect the scenic or unique natural features present and visibility of such, and/or encourages visitation by providing a safe outdoor recreational experience).	15	
17	The project provides new outdoor natural resource-based recreational activity or education by property acquisition or property development and enhancements.	25	
18	Project provides access or connection to other outdoor recreation facilities or areas.	10	
19	Project directly benefits wildlife, fish, plants, or habitat in critical need.	15	
20	Provides a detailed itemized budget sheet that reflects the details provided in the planning document.	30	
21	Documentation of public support for the project.	10	
22	Project provides significant nature-based recreational opportunities, conservation of natural resources, or other positive value of the nature of The MOST Act, but those values are not specifically reflected in Criteria's #5-10, 14, 15, 16, and 19. Add appropriate points here up to 50 points.	50	
	TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE / TOTAL SCORE	480	

Funding Cycle Timeline

The application process consists of three levels. The Pre-application is an initial submission of projects plans and funding needs.

The first level in the process—which informs every subsequent level—involves consideration by MOSTF staff. MOSTF staff check applications for eligibility, reviews for completion, and may reach out to the applicant for further information or comments. After the project evaluation process, MOSTF staff organizes and analyzes any additional comments and/or submissions and considers the appropriateness of the project toward fulfilling the fund’s goals, as well as an application’s completeness and conformity to application requirements. Successful applications will then be presented to the Board for review and scoring. Applicants who fail to continue to the next level shall be notified in writing.

Successful second level applicants will be scored by the Board. The Board may request additional information from the applicant, review MOSTF staff recommendations, or raise additional issues and concerns. Once the Board has scored the applications, MOSTF staff will rank projects based upon the average score of the Board. The Executive Director will present to the Board recommendations for grant allocation. At this time, the Board may request additional information, approve, or disapprove certain applications, or consult with outside experts. Once the Board has considered the totality of advice provided by the project evaluation process, MOSTF staff, and outside experts; the Board shall make a final funding decision on all applications scored by the Board. Applicants shall be notified of the Board’s funding decision.

Applicants approved by the Board for funding will receive notification of funding and must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Board prior to any fund’s disbursement.

Application Tips

The MOSTF Application is a thorough document. Applicants should review the application in advance for an understanding of the required information. Most items will require planning and preparation in advance of submitting the application. For example: Most recent audits and an itemized budget sheet must be submitted.

Section 2: Policies

2.1 MOSTF Funding Basics

Administration

The Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund program is administered through the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (MDFA). The MOSTF Office is located within the Woolfolk State Office Building on N. West Street, 13th Floor.

Funding Amount

There is no minimum or maximum grant request amount. Projects will be reviewed based on available funding and the evaluation criteria. Funded projects have two years from notice to proceed to complete the project. Any entity who fails to complete the project within two years must provide the reason for failure to complete the project in writing. See section 2.3 for information regarding extensions requests.

Reimbursement Payments

MOSTF functions as a reimbursement grant program. Grantees must have the financial capacity to pay for project expenses prior to being reimbursed by grant funds. Once project expenses have been incurred and paid for by the Grantee, payment documentation can then be submitted for reimbursement, up to the amount of the grant award. Where required by law, intergovernmental agreement, or budget policy, etc., state agencies may be allowed funding draws, requiring approval of MDFA. All reporting responsibilities must still be adhered to throughout the entirety of the project.

Expenses directly related to the project scope that are incurred after receiving contingent approval by the MOSTF Board will only be reimbursed if the project receives a Notice to Proceed, but before the maximum 24-month project completion period. Once a project is accepted and a notice to proceed is issued by MOSTF these expenditures can be sought as part of the project for reimbursement.

Matching Requirements

MOSTF grant program has no formal matching requirement. Matching funds are the responsibility of the applicant. MOSTF does not provide matching fund sources. The MOSTF Board will consider available grant funding and may base decisions on a project's financial makeup. Matching contributions are optional but contribute significantly towards total score. The exact match for individual projects will be determined by an approved Project Budget and identified in the Project Agreement. The MOSTF webpage offers information for potential matching fund sources that may be available. Confirmation of matching funds documentation is required in all submitted applications.

Retainage

MOSTF will retain (i.e., hold back) 10% of each reimbursement request that is approved by the Board. Once the project has reached 50% of completion the retainage percentage will be reduced to 5%. Upon completion of the project, submission of a Final Report, approval of all required documentation received, a final audit, and an inspection is conducted by MOSTF retainage will be released to the grantee. For construction projects an AIA inspection is required.

Property Appraisals

Property appraisals are required for all acquisition projects and must be based on current fair

market value of the land. Appraisal requirements also apply to any property proposed as match for acquisition or stewardship projects. Where an appraisal is necessary, one current full narrative appraisal produced by a certified and Mississippi Licensed General Appraiser, which meets current State guidelines, is required for the application phase.

The Applicants may be required to submit a second full narrative appraisal during the Second-level Application process if approved.

NOTICE: As of June 12, 2024 the MOSTF Board of Trustees will not consider funding for land acquisition project proposals until further notice.

Current Appraisal Guidelines are outlined below and should be consulted before initiating the appraisal process:

- 1) The Applicant will complete one appraisal during the application phase for all acquisitions and donated real property if used as match (either fee-simple, or the acquisition of a conservation easement). The appraisal must be performed by a certified and Mississippi Licensed General Appraiser.
- 2) The Applicant maybe required to submit second full narrative appraisal during the Second-level Application if approved.
- 3) At least one of the two appraisals will be reviewed and approved by an outside review appraiser assigned by MOSTF.
- 4) Costs incurred by the independent appraiser are eligible for MOSTF reimbursement, and subject to all MOSTF reimbursement policies if awarded.
- 5) All appraisals must be completed to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) standards.
- 6) All appraisals must be in narrative format.
- 7) For a donation of fee-simple property, the Applicant may complete an appraisal, accept an appraisal prepared by the donor, or accept a signed letter of value from the County Tax Assessor.
- 8) For a donation of a conservation easement, the Applicant may either complete an appraisal or accept an appraisal prepared by the donor.
- 9) The Applicant and the seller will agree on a sales price within twelve months of the effective date of the appraisal. The Applicant will work to assure the option is signed within twelve months of the effective date of the appraisal acceptance by MOSTF.

All appraisals may be subject to an independent appraisal review. This is required by MOSTF to ensure compliance to appraisal standards and consistency with current fair market value. MOSTF may assign the independent appraisal reviewer and forward the appraisals to the reviewer on behalf of the Applicant.

There is a cost for this service, although independent appraisal reviews are eligible for reimbursement under MOSTF. Applicants should expect an invoice directly from the independent reviewer, and in turn, should make payment directly to the reviewer.

Once this review has been concluded, MOSTF will update the Applicant on whether the appraisal is accepted or rejected. In the occurrence of a rejected appraisal, the Applicant will receive the reviewer's recommendations on how to bring the appraisal into acceptance. Acceptance of

appraisals will be entered into the application by the MOSTF staff when requirements are met. Notification will be sent to Applicants in the occurrence of a rejected appraisal, including an explanation of the items which must be addressed to achieve acceptance.

Note that appraisals and the independent MOSTF review can be quite time consuming. **Ordering your appraisals as early as possible is strongly encouraged.**

2.2 Applicant Eligibility

The following summarizes the eligibility requirements for entities and organizations to be eligible for MOSTF assistance. Entities that are not eligible are encouraged to consider partnering with eligible entities.

Eligible Project Applicants include:

- Municipalities
- State agencies, defined as any agency, department, commission, or institution of the State of Mississippi.
- Non-governmental entities, defined as a nonprofit organization with a 501(c)(3) status that is primarily concerned with the protection and conservation of land and natural resources, as evidenced by its organizational documents. Note: Relatives or any business which is associated with any MOSTF board member is ineligible.
 - To be eligible for funding, the non-governmental entity must submit its most recent audit, disclose any audit deficiencies in the previous 5 years, submit its certificate of good standing from the Mississippi Secretary of State, and submit a current list of its board members for purposes of conflicts of interest. Applications that fail to provide an audit or any of the above at the time of application will be considered “ineligible.”

2.3 Project Eligibility

Project Eligibility Criteria

Projects must meet at least one of the following to be eligible for MOSTF funding:

- 1) Improvement of state park outdoor recreation features and trails;
- 2) Acquisition and improvement of parks and trails by counties and municipalities, if such parks and trails lie within the jurisdiction of such counties and municipalities;
- 3) Restoration or enhancement projects to create or improve access to public waters and lands for public outdoor recreation, conservation education, or the safe use and enjoyment of permanently protected conservation land;
- 4) Restoration or enhancement on privately owned working agricultural lands and forests that support conservation of soil, water, habitat of fish and wildlife resources;
- 5) Restoration or enhancement of wetlands, native forests, native grasslands and other

unique habitats important for Mississippi's fish and wildlife; and

- 6) Acquisition of critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, fishing, military installation buffering or natural resource-based outdoor recreation. Real property may only be acquired under this subparagraph (vi) when the property:
- a. Is, at the time of acquisition, being leased by the state as a wildlife management area;
 - b. Adjoins or is in close proximity to state or federal wildlife management areas or state parks, or would provide better public access to such areas;
 - c. Is identified in a wildlife action plan developed by a state agency;
 - d. Constitutes riparian lands, and its acquisition is for the purpose of protecting any drinking water supply; or
 - e. Surrounds a military base or military installation.

Acquisition of land under this subparagraph (vi) may not be made through the exercise of any power of eminent domain or any condemnation proceeding.

Note: All aspects of prospective projects and acquisitions must completely reside within Mississippi's borders. Applications for projects in which any part of it resides in another state other than Mississippi, either in part or in whole, will not be considered for funding.

Items Eligible for Reimbursement

Below are the most typical items which may be submitted for reimbursement. To qualify for reimbursement, an expenditure must be directly related to the project and have occurred after the Project Agreement effective date, but before the project expiration date. All costs must be reasonable and support responsible financial stewardship principles. The Board of Trustees and DFA may evaluate budget items for exorbitance and require costs to be adjusted, where prudent. Final Reimbursement Requests must be made within 45 days of the project completion date.

Typical reimbursable items:

- Capital expenditures for acquisition (indirect costs not allowed). For example:
 - Purchase Cost (must not exceed highest appraised fair market value)
 - Independent appraisal reviews as required by MOSTF
 - Legal fees directly associated with the conveyance of real property or conservation easements
 - Environmental reviews
- Permits
- Small equipment cost in the form of small hand tools and material directly related to construction/development
- Direct materials
- Contractual services such as:
 - Legal fees directly related to the actual acquisition of a property
 - Surveys
 - Architectural and Engineering - Limited to no more than 15% of MOSTF funding
 - Environmental reviews, planning and consulting conducted after signing the

project agreement with MOSTF (Most other consulting services are not eligible. Contact the MOSTF staff for guidance.)

- Contractors and subcontractors directly related to the project scope
- Expenses directly related to the acquisition of real property or conservation easements
- Contingency - Limited to 15% of MOSTF funding

If unsure whether an expenditure is eligible for reimbursement, contact the MOSTF staff for verification prior to submission.

Items Eligible for Match

Higher levels of match commitment will yield higher point awards on the application. All sources of match must be identified in the grant application. To qualify for match, an item must be directly related to the project and have occurred no earlier than the Project Agreement effective date. The only exceptions to this are appraisals, project planning, grant writing, engineering, and environmental compliance reviews, not to exceed 15% of the total project cost, and within 18 months of the Project Agreement effective date, which may be counted as match only. The other exception is conservation easements and they must have been donated within 18 months of the application deadline date, which may be counted as match only. The Board may accept value of donations or expenses for work done up to 18 months previous to the application deadline if directly related to the project and imperative to the proposed work to be funded in the current application.

The following are common sources of matching funds:

- Cash expenses from the Applicant
- Funds secured via external grant
- Financial donations from private organizations and individuals
- In-kind labor, equipment, and materials provided by the Applicant
- In-kind donations of labor, services, materials, and equipment from private organizations and individuals. Professional service donations (e.g. engineering services, landscape design, etc.) are valued at an hourly rate consistent with similar professionals in the same part of the state. In-kind or donations of unskilled labor are calculated at an hourly rate of \$7.25 / hour (or the current minimum wage). Applicants must use the Mississippi Median Hourly Wage standards for the most comparable occupation identified on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics site, found at https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ms.htm
- Donation of real property or conservation easements from a third party. Donating property is an excellent way for private organizations and individuals to support public outdoor recreation. The following are several key considerations regarding donated property used as match:
 - To be considered as match, the Applicant must provide official appraisals, per section 2.1, prepared by a licensed appraiser and deemed acceptable for grant purposes by an independent MOSTF appraisal review. This process does not apply to other sources of matching funds.
 - Upon completion of the project, the donated property becomes subject to terms of the Project Agreement.
 - Donated property is subject to the same appraisal requirements as property

acquired with grant funds.

- Property may be acquired at or below its appraised fair market value, and the acquisition may be credited toward the applicant's matching funds credit. However, all real property purchases must be funded exclusively through the applicant's matching funds. MOSTF funds may not be used for the purchase of real property. The property acquisition may occur after MOSTF project awards have been announced, provided that documentation supporting the proposed acquisition is submitted with the application. At a minimum, such documentation must include a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the property owner, seller, or donor and the applicant entity, demonstrating the parties' intent and willingness to complete the transaction contingent upon the applicant receiving a MOSTF project award. For match credit purposes, the value of the property acquisition will be calculated based on the lesser of the purchase price or the appraised fair market value.

Note: Material donations must be entered at fair market value. These items shall not be valued based on donor or applicant opinion nor original purchase price by the donor.

The agreement retainage amount will be withheld by MOSTF until the Grantee's total match commitment is reconciled per the Agreement. Shortfalls in match will be reconciled by means of the project retainage.

Items Ineligible for Reimbursement or Match

Items that are not directly associated and essential for the completion and execution of a project are generally ineligible for reimbursement or match. Since the number of potentially ineligible items is space-prohibitive to list in this manual, it is recommended to contact MOSTF staff for verification prior to incurring such costs.

Examples of ineligible costs may include:

- Indirect costs (allowed only with stipulations approved by the MOSTF Board)
- Heavy Equipment and large tools
- Travel
- Incidental costs
- Ribbon-cutting/inaugurating ceremony costs
- Meals
- Expenditures prior to the approved Project Agreement start date or after the project expiration date, except for those items outlined in this section.
- Administrative labor costs of internal staff
- Maintenance of equipment

Note: Most consulting services are not eligible.

Extensions and Scope Revisions

Extensions

Grantees may request project term extensions if the project is expected to exceed the 24-month deadline. Extensions will be limited to an additional six (6) months and approved or disapproved by the MOSTF Board. Extensions or subsequent extensions may be reduced or denied at the Board's discretion. If the request is granted, the Grantee must sign a Project Agreement Amendment. If disapproved and the original grant term cannot be fulfilled, funding may be deobligated in part or in whole. *An Amendment Request Form is provided on the MOSTF webpage at www.dfa.ms.gov/most.*

Change of Scope

Grantees may request a change in the scope of the original project. Requests will be reviewed by MOSTF staff, and a recommendation of action will be forwarded to the Board. The Board may either approve or disapprove the request. If the request is granted, the Grantee must sign a Project Agreement Amendment.

If disapproval of the request will prevent the project from being completed as originally awarded, funding may be deobligated in part or in whole. *An Amendment Request Form is available on the MOSTF webpage at www.dfa.ms.gov/most.*

MOSTF staff will make every attempt to submit requests to the Board of Trustees at the next meeting, although the timing of submitted requests and Board schedules may not allow review until subsequent meetings. For this reason, Grantees should heavily consider the need for such requests to minimize project delays. All requests requiring MOST Board approval must be received no later than one week prior to any scheduled MOSTF Board meeting date.

Note: *It is critical that Grantees understand that expenses, donations, or in-kind materials or services may be ineligible for consideration after the original agreement date and before an approved Project Agreement Amendment is mutually signed and tendered by MOSTF. Incurring these costs prior to an approved Project Agreement Amendment will be done at the Grantee's own risk.*

2.4 Project Types

Funding for projects is based on costs associated with the activities outlined in the application. For projects supported by MOSTF funding, applicants must own the property, have secured a conservation easement that provides legal access for the purposes of the project, or have documented landowner authority allowing the development to occur.

Note: All leases and use agreements must have at least 25 years remaining, measured from the mutually signed Project Agreement date, to qualify for MOSTF funding.

Acquisition Projects

NOTICE: As of June 12, 2024 the MOSTF Board of Trustees will not consider funding land acquisition project proposals until further notice. Otherwise, see below:

The acquisition of property may be in the form of either fee-simple, donation, lease (of 25 years

or more beyond the Project Agreement date), or through conservation easement.

Land acquisitions for local assistance must occur in accordance with state and Federal guidelines for preparation of appraisals and eligible transaction costs (see section 2.1). The following are several highlights regarding grant-funded land acquisition.

- **Condemnation/Eminent Domain:** Acquisitions of land may not be made through the exercise of any power of eminent domain or any condemnation proceeding.
- **Property Value:** Awards for land acquisition (and property used as match) are based on the appraised value or the purchase price and must not exceed fair market value as authenticated by the independent appraisal reviewer.
- **Eligible Costs:** Eligible acquisition costs include the fair market value of the property/actual purchase price and real estate transaction costs (e.g., appraisal costs, land surveys, legal fees, etc.).
- **Pre-Award Acquisition:** No land can be acquired prior to funding unless the Applicant receives a letter of retroactivity from MOSTF. This letter is subject to Board of Trustee approval, and schedule. Any Applicants who anticipate acquiring property prior to award should contact the MOSTF staff prior to applying to request a letter of retroactivity. These shall be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements qualify for MOSTF funding. Within the application narrative, the following elements should be addressed:

- Accreditation of application and/or easement manager.
- Clear identification of each specific conservation need and value.
 - Specific species or attribute to be protected (habitat, species, clean air, water quality/quantity, prevention of sprawl, etc.)
 - Conservation priority (Species or habitat endangered, threatened, or recommended for listing, nationally or local listed, etc.)
 - Amount and frequency of attribute, species, or Specific Conservation Areas (SCAs) within the protected property. For example: "100 acres of longleaf pine and gopher tortoise habitat in the eastern portion of the total 150-acre property, 25 acres of red cockaded woodpecker habitat on the west end of the property, separated by 25 acres of land with no conservation value."
- A detailed and measurable management plan for each specific conservation need, to include Best Management Practices to be employed. There should be a direct and conspicuous relationship between each conservation need and the associated management plan item.
- How the management plan will maintain its goals in the future.
- Consistence with the Mississippi State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) priorities, Mississippi Department of

Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks priorities, and/or Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

- Statewide significance and public benefit of the easement.
- Non-conservation development restrictions.
- How and by whom mineral rights will be held.

Required Uploads in the Application for Conservation Easement Purchase or Donation:

- A copy of the proposed easement agreement must be uploaded where noted in the application
- Proof of accreditation of application and/or easement manager

Certain elements are not allowed in a conservation easement under MOSTF. Those are:

- Subdividing without Board of Trustees approval time frame
- Conversion of any part of the easement out of conservation as written in the original easement language
- Amendments to the easement unless it is to expand, protect, or improve the conservation value of the property

Note: *In the occurrence of dissolution of the conservation easement trust, manager, or holder, it is important for all parties to understand that the conservation easement shall remain protected in perpetuity.*

Combination Projects

A Combination Project is one that funds both the acquisition of a property, as well as a stewardship component of the property once acquired. Both aspects should be clearly outlined in the application narrative criteria.

Regional Significance

MOSTF aims to prioritize projects in such a way as to satisfy the public's desire for conservation lands, improve the outdoor recreation experience, and promote the sustainability of Mississippi's natural resources. One of the methods used to achieve this is to evaluate the *regional significance* of each project. This can be satisfied in many ways, although in simple terms, regional significance can be achieved by enhancing the natural-resourced based outdoor experience and quality of Mississippi's natural resources, while providing value to a greater community beyond the local area.

2.5 Control

Grantees must maintain adequate control over any land acquired or developed with MOSTF funds. Adequate control may be defined as ownership, conservation easement, use agreement, or lease. Leases must have at least 25 years remaining at the time of a mutually signed Project Agreement.

Applications submitted by an entity other than the property owner must include a signed Statement of Landowner Support in the Application. This document is to be procured by the applicant.

The applicant must identify all outstanding rights or interests held by others on subject properties. A signed letter explaining control and tenure or an affidavit proving ownership and identifying all outstanding rights or interests, if applicable, will suffice (this document is to be procured by the applicant).

Long-term Obligations for Grant Recipients

It is important for potential Grantees to understand long-term obligations that are associated with this program. The following are several key requirements.

- **Ownership:** Grantees must retain legal control and oversight of the property (via ownership or lease) and maintain facilities on property acquired or developed with a MOSTF funding.
- **Income:** Grantees may charge reasonable user fees. All income received from these user fees must be used towards management and maintenance of the subject property. MOSTF funds shall not be awarded to projects aimed at generating general revenue.
- **Perpetuity language for acquisitions** – Real property or conservation easements acquired with MOSTF funds shall remain protected as conservation lands into perpetuity. Grantees are required to record a final deed with the local government having jurisdiction containing the required Protective Language: “The Property was acquired in part using grant funds provided to the Grantee by the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act, specifically MOSTF Grant Number _____. The Property shall, from this date forward, be managed for conservation purposes in accordance with the conservation objective of the Grant and in compliance with the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Act. The property shall not be used for purposes inconsistent with the conservation objective of the Grant without the approval and conditions set by Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund Board of Trustees.”
- **Project Implementation Schedule** – A schedule outlining the timeline and occurrence of each major project milestone and limited to an allowable 24-month project period.
- **Environmental Review Checklist** –The environmental review checklist ensures that any impact upon any MOSTF assisted site is in accordance with good stewardship principles. Prior to the completion of the checklist, the party responsible should consult with any agency which has jurisdiction by law, special expertise, or other interest with respect to any environmental impact or resource. *(This is a downloadable template to be completed, signed by the authorizing representative, and uploaded into the application portal. This can be found at www.dfa.ms.gov/most)* If the responsible party determines that the project may significantly affect the quality of the environment, the responsible party shall consult with the government agency responsible and shall prepare an environmental effect report.
- **Environmental Review Report** – Should an environmental review report be required, the

responsible party shall coordinate with all applicable government agencies and prepare the environmental effect report. The guidelines for the environmental review effect report are available at www.dfa.ms.gov/mostf.

Section 3: Grant Application Process

3.1 Grant Application Process

MOSTF annual grant opportunities involve a competitive application process via an online application. **No paper application submissions will be considered for funding.** The funding levels and priorities are set by the Board of Trustees and may change year-to-year.

The application is the initial stage of the funding application process. Since MOSTF is a competitive program, the application serves as the basis for selecting which projects advance towards approval. It is fundamentally comprised of weighted grading criteria, which shall accumulate a total score reviewable by the Board of Trustees. Successful applications advance to the Second-level phase.

The road to securing MOSTF funding begins with the completion of the Application, available at www.dfa.ms.gov/mostf. It is in this initial phase that the Applicant inputs their demographic data, contact information, project scope, answers administrative and qualitative criteria questions, and supplies required project documentation needed by MOSTF to determine eligibility of each project.

Applications must be submitted by midnight on the prescribed deadline date. All applications are reviewed by MOSTF staff to verify applicant eligibility, application completeness, and are priority ranked based on the project evaluation criteria and funding cycle priorities.

Applications approved pending more information shall be notified and provided with a set deadline to provide the requested information. Applicants may be granted an extension subject to approval by MOSTF staff. Failure to provide requested information may deem the application ineligible.

MOSTF submits all eligible applications to the Board of Trustees for scoring. Upon scoring by the MOSTF Board, MOSTF staff ranks the projects and presents the ranking to the MOSTF Board for potential funding awards. Initial funding award decisions typically occur in January-February and are subject to change as needed.

3.2 Required Application Items

Specific directions on how to satisfy these requirements are contained within the application itself. The application can be completed online at www.dfa.ms.gov/mostf. All eligible applications must include:

- **Responses to each of the application evaluation criteria**

- **Application Cover Letter** – This official letter is the instrument demonstrating support and authority to submit an application and must be signed by a ranking authorizing representative of the entity (Board Chairperson, Commissioner, Mayor, etc.). It must be on official letterhead.
- **Site Plan and/or Conceptual Plan** – This may be an artist’s or engineer’s rendering and visual representation of the proposed project. All elements receiving MOSTF funding **MUST** be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be represented.

(This is a document of the Applicant’s own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Property Boundary Map** – This map shall depict the official boundary, as committed to by the Applicant, which shall be considered the Project Site. All MOSTF funded elements must reside within the Property Boundary Map. For acquisitions, the Property Boundary must be the entire parcel(s) receiving MOSTF funding. For other projects, it may be only that portion of an existing parcel(s) affected by MOSTF funding.

(This is a document of the Applicant’s own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Project Location Map** – An unofficial map depicting the relative location of the Project Site to local towns and cities. MOSTF staff will utilize this map to visit the Project Site for MOSTF required inspections. Websites such as Google Maps, Rand McNally, etc. will suffice in being the basis for this map.

(This is a document of the Applicant’s own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

The following are minimal criteria for an acceptable Project Location Map:

- Project and Applicant names
- Project Site address (GPS coordinates may be used if no address is assigned)
- At least one significant town must be depicted
- Major highway designations and the street names immediately surrounding/leading to the Project Site.
- North Arrow
- **Photos of the site with photo key** –Applicants are required to submit various photos of the key components of the project receiving funding for MOSTF review. A map of the Project Site must be included showing the relative location of each photograph taken. Each location is to be numbered corresponding to the photograph’s number, and an arrow pointing in the direction of viewing from the photographer’s perspective. All sides of buildings are to be photographed as well as any area being affected by MOSTF funding. No more than 2 photos per page are to be uploaded to the online application.

(This is a document of the Applicant’s own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Detailed Project Budget Worksheet** – A MOSTF Budget Template is provided. This budget shall include all categories of expenditures, items that will be covered by matching funds/sources/in-kind/donated, and detailed enough to reflect the types of materials and expenses anticipated for reimbursement. It should show units of measure/piece count estimates, cost per unit, proper names of materials, etc. Only items and values on this budget will be considered for reimbursement. **Customized budget sheets are acceptable but must provide the required information.** *This is a downloadable template to be completed and uploaded into the application portal. This can be found at www.dfa.ms.gov/most.*
- **Project Description** – This is a detailed narrative describing the entire scope of the project, including location, acreage, purpose, need, and all MOSTF funded project elements. Applicants should focus on describing the elements and activities receiving funding, rather than convincing narrative content.
- **Project Plans (If applicable)** - Projects involving engineering elements require an electronic version of site engineering plans, depicting locations of elements within the site and distances to scale, and uploaded to the application where requested. *(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal. **Note: All plans must be submitted in .pdf format**)*
- **Environmental Review Checklist** –The environmental review checklist ensures that any impact upon any MOSTF assisted site is in accordance with good stewardship principles. *(This is a downloadable template to be completed, signed by the authorizing representative). This can be found at www.dfa.ms.gov/most.*
- **A resolution adopted by the governing entity of the Applicant authorizing the application and committing all funds required to complete the proposed project.** *(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)*
- **Current copy of the lease or conservation easement (if applicable)**
- **A copy of the proposed conservation easement agreement (if applicable)**
- **Proof of accreditation of application and/or easement manager (if applicable)**
- **Copy of conservation easement management plan, current and/or proposed (if applicable)**
- **Signed statement from landowner expressing support (if applicable)** – A legally defensible document that demonstrates the support of the landowner for the project in its entirety *if the Applicant and owner are not the same.* *(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)*
- **Letters of financial commitment from sponsors and partners**
(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)
- **Approvals to cross a public highway or a public utility right-of-way (if applicable)** -

Applicants with projects requiring the use of known existing Rights of Way should contact the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) for direction on attaining approval for use as needed. Failure to do so may cause delays in the execution of the Project Agreement.

- **Appraisals** (Acquisition or real property donation only. See section 2.1 and 2.3E) – Subject to MOSTF independent appraisal review. See section 2.1
- A **Most Recent Audit** and disclose any audit deficiencies in the previous five (5) years. The Board will not accept an application from a non-governmental organization that cannot provide an adequate audit.
- **Certificate of Good Standing** from the Mississippi Secretary of State, if a nongovernmental organization.
- Current **List of Entities Board Members**, if nongovernmental organization.

3.3 Application Definitions

Applicant Address: The Main Point of Contact's (defined below) address where the Applicant can be contacted regarding application questions.

Applicant Chief Elected Official, Director or President: Lead official who has authorized and will approve this project on behalf of the applying entity.

Applicant Name: Legal name of the agency or organization requesting funding.

County: County in which project will occur. List all applicable counties.

Entity Characterization: Choose the appropriate option best describing your entity. If you have chosen other, please contact the MOSTF staff for direction and assistance.

Main Point of Contact: This is the individual that represents the Applicant and is tasked with completing the application(s), working directly with MOSTF in submitting all necessary documentation, and managing all inbound and outbound communications between the Applicant and MOSTF. Duties may be delegated down within the Applicant's organizations, although the Main Point of Contact must remain constant, as practicable as possible, and should be familiar with all aspects of the project scope and progress.

Project Description: Provides a detailed description of the proposed project scope as well as all elements that shall receive funding. All narratives are limited to a predetermined word count by the application itself. Applicants should adhere to the following best practices:

- The narrative should focus primarily on elements to be funded or claimed as match. Avoid "fluff" and limit discussion regarding partnership support, which is more appropriately accounted for in Questions 9 and Question 16. Additionally, the same guideline should be adhered to for economic impacts created by the proposal. This should be addressed in Question 12.

- Make a strong and obvious distinction between elements seeking MOSTF assistance and existing or future elements not applicable to MOSTF support. There are times when describing existing/future site elements are vital depicting the total scope, but this should be kept to a minimum. Failure to do so may cause confusion on what is actually being funded, which may limit the Reviewers' ability to properly award points during project review.

Project Title: Unique, short, and concise name placed on your project, which will remain the same throughout the life of the project. This name must stay consistent throughout the process and cannot be changed.

Secondary Administrator or secondary point of contact: An alternate point of contact used throughout the life of the grant project in the instance that the Main Point of Contact is unavailable. This individual should be familiar with all aspects of the project scope and progress.

Section 4: Grant Recipient Requirements

4.1 Grant Term

Grant recipients will have 24 months to complete the project from the date of the mutually signed project agreement.

Extensions/Variations: Any variance or extensions must be requested via a Project Agreement Amendment, Extension Request, or project resubmission. All formal requests will be reviewed by MOSTF staff and approved by the Board of Trustees. Project dates may be subject to alteration by MOSTF due to fund availability.

Start Date: Once an executed Project Agreement is in place, Grantees will receive a Notice to Proceed and are then authorized to begin work. This marks "Day 1" of the project timeline/timeframe.

End Date: Projects must be completed within 24 months of the signed Project Agreement. No additional costs may be incurred after the date.

4.2 Reporting Requirements

The following reports are required for projects:

- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Reimbursement Requests
- Final Report once the project is completed

Quarterly Progress Reports

Once a Project Agreement is signed, the Grantee shall report to MOSTF on the progress of the

project, on a quarterly basis via the MOSTF online portal as follows:

- 1st Quarter – Period beginning January 1, ending March 31: Report is due April 15.
- 2nd Quarter - Period beginning April 1, ending June 30: Report is due July 15.
- 3rd Quarter - Period beginning July 1, ending September 30: Report is due October 15.
- 4th Quarter - Period beginning October 1, ending December 31: Report is due January 15.

Grantees are required to submit Quarterly Progress Reports to MOSTF to ensure that MOSTF is aware of the project's progress. Quarterly Progress Reports can be accessed and filled out on the MOSTF Application portal. The progress report summarizes the work accomplished to date, any issues that may arise with the project, an estimated percentage of project completion, and an estimate of funds to be expended over the next quarter. Photos or other documents are required in communicating the status of your project. The Board will not consider approval of any reimbursement request for a project that is delinquent to a Quarterly Report.

Reimbursement Requests

Payment of grant funds is on a reimbursement basis. Accurate and comprehensive documentation of project costs is critical. Applicants will be required to submit to MOSTF a Reimbursement Request as well as detailed documentation (e.g., proof-of-purchase, proof-of-payment, force account details, etc.) prior to reimbursement. Where required by law, intergovernmental agreement, or budget policy, etc., state agencies may be allowed funding draws, requiring approval of MOSTF. All reporting responsibilities must still be adhered to throughout the entirety of the project.

Prior to final reimbursement, Grantees also need to demonstrate that the property title does not contain any issues which may impact the legal authority of the Applicant to conduct the proposed stewardship project or acquire the property. Applicants are encouraged to conduct a title search as early as possible in the project development process.

Grantees may request reimbursements at any time, although it is recommended that requests are submitted monthly or at least quarterly. The Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) will generally make payment in less than 10-15 days after a Reimbursement Request has been approved. Reimbursement Requests are based on actual project expenditures that align with the Grantee's Project Agreement, including the approved project application scope and budget. MOSTF agrees to make payment in accordance with Mississippi "Timely Payments for Purchases by Public Bodies" laws, which generally provides for payment of undisputed amounts by the agency within forty-five (45) calendar days of receipt of invoice. Mississippi Code Annotated § 31-7-301 et seq.

Adequate supporting documentation for all expenses and match are required with each request, including but not limited to:

- Proof of payment, including payment for match items
- Invoices
- Donation and in-kind documentation

- Eligible equipment purchase documentation
- Documentation of procurement/bidding process
- Photos

DFA or MOSTF may request additional supporting documentation to process a reimbursement as needed.

The MOSTF Board generally meets on the 2nd Monday of each month. All Reimbursement Requests or Amendment Requests must be received no later than one week prior to any scheduled MOSTF Board meeting date. Earlier submissions are recommended to ensure requests are received in time to be placed on the meeting agenda.

Note: *Quarterly Progress Reports must be up to date to submit Reimbursement Requests.*

Partial Billings

A partial billing is considered to be a request made before the project is completed. **Total partial billings may not exceed 75% of the total grant amount.**

Final Billing

A final billing is made when the project's scope of work is complete. All required documentation has been submitted and approved, and the project is open to the public, if applicable. Grantees must submit a Final Reimbursement Request and identify any remaining unneeded surplus balance via an attached memo.

Project Agreement Amendment Requests submitted to MOSTF in an effort to utilize surplus funds shall not be considered for approval. Only those items as submitted in the original budget and scope are eligible for reimbursement, per the Project Agreement.

Once a project has been closed, the remaining funds are no longer obligated and DFA cannot make additional payments.

Public Information

All information and documentation submitted to MOSTF is open to public review. MOSTF requires that confidential or sensitive information, including home addresses, social security numbers, and personal bank account numbers, be removed or redacted from documents submitted to MOSTF. **This applies to bank account numbers included on copies of checks.**

In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, notice of the date, time, and location of MOSTF Board meetings are posted on the DFA Transparency website.

Proof of Payment

Payments are made on a reimbursement basis. Grantees must use a verifiable payment method

and submit proof of payment for all project expenses with each request. Proof of payment may include a ledger or transaction report generated by the Grantee's accounting system, a bank statement, or a cancelled check. MOSTF will not reimburse payments made in cash, as this method does not provide a verifiable audit trail.

Documenting Goods and Services

Grantees must retain and submit a copy of the original invoice or receipt for all goods and services purchased for the project. All goods and services must be directly related to the approved scope of work.

Documenting Payroll (Force Account)

Work performed by many internal departments, such as Corrections, Public Works, etc. may be counted towards match for time worked directly on the project. An applicant's direct administrative staff are not eligible for reimbursement or match.

Time directly related to the approved scope of work and conducted on the Project Site may be reported as a project cost. Refer to 2.3 for requirements around eligibility of force account expense for reimbursement or match.

All payroll related costs must be documented on a timesheet that meets the following standards. Alternative reports generated by the Grantee's accounting system may be considered sufficient supporting documentation.

- Reflect an after-the-fact determination of the actual activity of each employee.
- Account for the total activity for which employees are compensated.
- Signed or authorized electronically by the individual employee or by a responsible supervisor having firsthand knowledge of the activities performed by the employee.
- Prepared at least monthly and coincide with one or more pay periods.
- Not be budget estimates or other distributions based on a percentage before work was performed.

Documenting Donation of Items or Services

Donations are third party contributions provided at no cost. Items and services are considered donated when they are provided by a third-party organization at either a reduced or cost-free basis. Some examples include surveys, appraisals, and engineering services. You must retain a copy of the invoice and/or a letter from the organization acknowledging the donation and its value.

The value of donated items or services must be included in the Project Budget Worksheet. The value of donations cannot be reimbursed, cannot include items previously purchased with MOSTF funds, and cannot be reported on more than one grant, even if it is unassociated with the MOSTF project. To be counted towards a project's match, donations must be documented on the **Donation / In-Kind Tracking Form** available at www.dfa.ms.gov/most.

Documenting Donated or Volunteer Labor

Donated labor is time provided by a person without compensation. Labor donations are valued at an hourly rate of pay, excluding taxes, benefits, and overtime.

Refer to policy 2.3 for volunteer or donated labor rates. Use the **Volunteer Labor Tracking Form** available at www.dfa.ms.gov/most to account for donated labor.

Alternate documentation may be accepted at MOSTF's discretion and must include the following:

- Individual's name
- Contact information
- Dates of service
- Worksite or location name
- Description of work performed
- Hours worked
- Individual or crew leader signature

Costs associated with food or beverages are not allowable for volunteers.

Documenting Donated Materials and Supplies

Materials and supplies are considered donated when they are given to the project at no cost. The reported value of donated materials is the fair market value of the materials or supplies at the time entered into the application. To document donated materials and supplied, submit the **Donation/In Kind Tracking Form** along with information to support the valuation determination.

Documenting Vendor Discounts

Normal vendor discounts and items "on sale" cannot be counted towards the match. However, discounts can be counted when provided to you from a vendor specifically for the MOSTF project and documented as a donation. Discounts can be used as match if the following is provided:

- Invoice that clearly shows the retail price and discount provided and
- Letter from the vendor that states they have provided a discount as a donation and including the valuation of the discount.

Documenting Donated Real Property

Property acquired at less than its appraised market value may be considered donated real property. To be considered as donated real property, a statement of donation from the donor must be submitted for each property acquired. Appraisals from the time of donation must be provided.

4.3 Final Report

Grantees must inform MOSTF that their project is complete by submitting a Final Report and mark it as “final” prior to the expiration of the 24-month project period. The final report serves as notice that the Grantee has completed the project in compliance with applicable regulations and must include:

- Digital images of all completed project elements which received funding.
- Indication that the project is complete, accessible, and open to the public, if applicable.
- Documentation that all corrective items identified during the MOSTF final on-site inspection have been completed. This may require an additional MOSTF final inspection prior to close-out.
- Official As-built drawings in PDF format (If applicable).
- For acquisitions only - An updated property deed with required Protective Language and recording stamps from the local jurisdiction’s County Clerk’s office.
- Final reimbursement request submitted to MOSTF, marked as “Final”.
- Authorizing officer’s signature

MOSTF staff will inspect all completed projects. Final payments will not be made until final documentation is received and approved, and the project has been inspected and verified as complete.

4.4 Publicity/Signage

Grantees must make every effort to acknowledge and publicize that MOSTF assisted in funding. Acknowledgement of participation in MOSTF via a successful grant shall be conspicuously placed at the project location for public viewing. Grantees may incorporate acknowledgements onto existing or new signage at the project location. For projects which have received MOSTF funding, its logo, with the MOSTF Logo shall be included in this signage. Final signage should be constructed of permanent materials. Temporary materials are allowed during the ongoing project process. Permanent signage is required at time of project inspection and/or prior to final reimbursements are approved. MOSTF Logo graphics are available at www.dfa.ms.gov/mostf.

Additionally, any property receiving MOSTF funding shall post the program’s participation on the Grantee’s web page.

4.5 Procurement

Grantees must follow their own internal required vendor/contractor bid and procurement policies currently in place.

4.6 Retention Requirements

Grantees are subject to a MOSTF audit of their project file. Grantees must retain and keep accessible all books, documents, papers, and records that are directly related to the MOSTF project **for a minimum of five years** following the close of the program agreement. These documents include but are not limited to:

- Invoices and receipts
- Timesheets
- Copies of payments
- Copies of internal transactions
- Procurement documentation
- Donation logs and statements
- All books, records, documents, data, and other materials relevant to the grant agreement.

The records must support all project-related costs reported to MOSTF and be made available upon request. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the end of the five years, Grantees must keep the records until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved.

Section 5: Grant Closeout

Grant closeout signifies the completion of the project. MOSTF must ensure all agreed-upon work, as described in the Project Agreement, is completed by the project expiration date. MOSTF will determine that all required work and applicable administrative actions have been accomplished. Any discrepancies will be returned to the Grantee to be remedied. Final payment will not occur until all required final reports and documents have been approved by MOSTF to ensure all aspects of the Project Agreement have been met.

No later than 45 days after work is completed or the project end-date, whichever comes first, Grantees must submit a Final Reimbursement Request and denote them as such. Within 45 days of receiving the Final Report, MOSTF staff will complete a final audit of all project requirements and submissions. MOSTF Final Project Audit, which may include but not be limited to:

- Audit of all paperwork submitted by the grantee for accuracy and completion
- Audit of all expenditures against the total project budget amount
- Audit of all previous reimbursements and requests
- Verification of a total match submitted by the grantee
- Final site inspection conducted by MOSTF staff

Once MOSTF deems that all requirements of the Project Agreement have been satisfied, retainage will be dispersed to the Grantee per the Project Agreement. In any instance where an overpayment of either reimbursement or retainage is realized, the Grantee is required to refund an amount back to DFA equivalent to the overage.

Note: The information in this manual is subject to change without notice and should not be construed as the only source of information governing the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund (MOSTF). Potential changes to the policies and procedures herein may be necessary to properly administer the program during any particular funding cycle. MOSTF staff will make every effort to assist Applicants in satisfying changes in criteria and requirements as they occur.