



***Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area
Heritage Community Grant
Request for 2026 Funding General
Instructions***

Purpose and Scope of NHA

The purpose of the National Heritage Area program is to enhance, conserve, and provides connectivity to cultural resources of a unique and defined area through identification, interpretation, and promotion. These cultural resources of National Heritage Areas provide authentic experiences and serve as a source of pride and identity. Stakeholders in this effort benefit from increased awareness and appreciation of their environment, history, culture, traditions, and lifestyles. The economic effects of heritage resources benefit the entire region and support the long-term enhancement and conservation of those qualities that make National Heritage Areas unique. The Mississippi Coast National Heritage Area (hereinafter referred to as MS Coast NHA), working through the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, administers the National Heritage Area program for the six counties that make up the MS Coast NHA. Your MS Coast NHA is a partnership of communities, businesses, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals who value the region's rich cultural and environmental diversity, history, natural beauty, and traditions. These partnerships tell the Mississippi Gulf Coast's story of its national significance. Visitors experience the Heritage Area through a set of integrated themes that forefronts the Coast's unique qualities and emphasizes the important role the region has played in history.

Funding for the MS Coast NHA's Heritage Community Grant program is provided by the National Park Service.

What Types of Applicants Are Eligible to Apply

To help accomplish the goals and objectives of the MS Coast NHA Management Plan, the program offers matching grants to provide and leverage funding for innovative projects across the region that preserve, interpret, and develop heritage resources within these thematic areas and that expand economic opportunity.

The MS Coast NHA Program is interested in projects that are:

- Regional or multi-county in scope.
- Involve active partnerships between organizations.
- Leverage substantial matches from project participants and other grantors.

The following six (6) counties of the Mississippi Coast NHA region are eligible to apply for a grant and are as follows:

- George
- Hancock
- Harrison
- Jackson
- Pearl River
- Stone

The following types of organizations serving in the six (6) county MS Coast NHA region are eligible to apply for a grant:

- Units of state and local government.
- Federally recognized Indian tribes.
- Academic institutions.
- Non-profit organizations with a 501c3 or 501c6 tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.
- Recognized Gulf Coast Outpost Businesses. *

*The Gulf Coast Outpost business recognition program is part of the 2016 Nature-Based Tourism Plan for Coastal Mississippi. Both the plan and checklist can be downloaded at <http://msgulfcoastheritage.ms.gov/natural/gulf-coast-outpost/>.

The plan was developed for the Heritage Area by stakeholders in the industry. Business owners and operators are recognized through a checklist that focuses on training, sustainability and stewardship. The program is aimed at those companies whose primary business is dependent on the natural environment in Mississippi's six coastal counties. This includes eco tours, locally owned outfitters, charter boat operators, tour guides, eco-lodges and agritourism entities.

The MS Coast NHA does not provide grants to individuals.

Please note that the MS Coast NHA will not award funding for any open Heritage Community Sub-Grant Agreements. Previous Sub-Recipients must be in good standing and have all projects closed out before being eligible to apply for the next round of funding.

The project must constitute a new activity for the applicant rather than the continuation of an existing program. Expansion of an existing program to serve new audiences and/or explore new content may constitute a new activity.

Grant Amounts

Anticipated typical awards will range from \$5,000 to \$75,000. As noted in the grant application, the grant applicant must provide at least an equal contribution of matches from non-federal sources (see the Matching Contributions section of the instructions).

Project Categories

Historical: Historic Preservation & Other Community Enhancement Projects- Projects to enhance listed or eligible national register properties (e.g., condition assessments, plans, research, etc.) for historic or cultural resources nominated to the National Register for Historic Places. Historic sites (i.e. those listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places) preserved through restoration, rehabilitation or adaptive reuse, and reconstruction. Historic properties (i.e. listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places) maintained through monitoring and small-scale maintenance projects.

Cultural: Collections: Documentation and Conservation Projects, Paintings, Artifacts, Archives, Oral Histories, Video Histories, etc. Work in which the primary purpose is to document cultural traditions or conserve artifacts. Documenting collections to develop interpretive or educational materials.

Natural: Land, Water & Environmental Conservation Projects- Projects begun or continued to conserve natural or scenic areas (i.e., surveys, condition assessments, plans, etc.).

Recreation: Recreation Development Projects -Trail or park enhancement projects, such as parking, signage, trailheads, lighting, etc. or trail designation projects. Can include recreational events and marketing materials (such as brochures, maps, guides)

Projects should focus on one or more of the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area's core goals that include the project categories. A detailed list of goals can be located on pages twenty-two (22) through thirty (30) of the management plan and can be downloaded at <http://msgulfcoastheritage.ms.gov/> under the "About MGCNHA" tab. <https://msgulfcoastheritage.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MGCNHA-ManagementPlan-final.pdf>

Evaluation Criteria

Grant application will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- **Public benefit:** This includes the project's economic impact as well as social impacts, community impacts, and quality-of-life impacts. Also included is the project's potential to promote public understanding and appreciation of the heritage resource(s).
- **Significance of the heritage resource(s):** To be preserved, interpreted, developed, or marketed.
- **Geographic scope of project:** Greater consideration will be given to projects that are regional or multi-county in nature.

- **Partnerships:** Greater consideration will be given to projects that involve active partnerships between organizations.
- **Capability:** Evidence of sufficient management and financial ability to complete the project.
- **Local support:** Evidence that the project has support within the local or regional community.
- **Consultation:** Evidence that folklorists or historians have been consulted if the project interprets historical or cultural facts.
- **Sustainability:** For projects that are intended to continue beyond the life of the grant, greater consideration will be given to those that show a strong potential for sustainability.
- **Environmentally responsible use of resources:** Applicants are encouraged to incorporate environmentally friendly principles, practices, and messages in the design and implementation of their projects wherever possible.
- **Quality of plans for implementing and evaluating the project.**

Funding Timeline

- Call for proposals announced: **Monday, January 26, 2026.**
- Grant Q&A Conference call: **Monday, February 23, 2026.**
- Any Grant Q&A questions will be emailed to conference participants: **Tuesday, February 24, 2026.**
- Deadline for receiving proposals: Rolling deadlines until grant funds are exhausted. Applications will be accepted on a first-come-first-serve basis beginning **9:00 a.m. Tuesday, January 27, 2026**, until grant funds are expended or **4:00 p.m. Thursday, March 12, 2026.**
- Applicants are notified of funding decisions as applications are selected for funding, with the final notifications given no later than **Tuesday, March 19, 2026.**
- Period of Performance start date for awarded applications: no earlier than **Tuesday, March 19, 2026.**
- Mandatory Grant Administration Orientation Meeting: **TBD, July, 2026.**
- Grant award and project sign presentations photo opportunities will be scheduled within sixty days of project start date and done a location convenient for the sub-recipient.

Selection Criteria and Scoring of Applications

The MS Coast NHA staff will review all submitted applications and provide comments to the Grants Advisory Committee. Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.

The Grants Advisory Committee will score all applications, based on objective criteria linked to Management Plan for grant, and make funding recommendations to the MS Coast NHA Director and the MDMR Executive Director.

The Advisory Committee will determine any weighting of evaluation criteria. Grant applicants may be asked to provide clarification and additional information during review process. The 2026 grant cycle is expected to be competitive.

All applications must fall into at least one (1) of four (4) project categories (historical, cultural, natural resources or recreation).

All applications must serve at least one (1) of the six (6) coastal counties of Mississippi.

Grant awards will provide for equitable distribution of available funds to grants related to all counties that apply for funds in each year.

Grantee Reporting Requirements

Quarterly progress report forms are due for each quarter a grant is active. Final report on annual use of funds is due to MS Coast NHA to staff no later than **Wednesday, July 30, 2027**.

Due with the Final Report are Final Financial Report Form, photographic evidence of the finished project and progress, and accurate acknowledgment of MS Coast NHA Heritage Community Grant funding in documents, on plaques, and/or signage.

Eligible Project Cost

The MS Coast NHA Community Grant funds may be used to cover project costs that are necessary and reasonable for the accomplishment of project objectives. Such costs may include labor, services, materials, equipment (with a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or less), supplies, and travel. Grant funds may not be used to purchase real estate or real property.

The grant application must include a completed Project Budget Form, which provides a framework for itemizing the project budget.

Applicants may include indirect costs in their proposed grant budgets. Indirect costs are costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefiting more than one project or program (including the proposed grant project) that are not readily apportioned between those projects or programs. Examples may include the costs of rent, utilities, and accounting.

If an applicant has a current negotiated indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, that rate may be requested in the grant proposal. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, the applicant may use a rate of 10% of the direct costs to be charged

to the grant. Indirect cost rates may not be applied to the costs of equipment, however. Applicants have the option of not including indirect costs in their grant budgets.

By way of illustration, a grant applicant requesting \$9,000 in direct project costs could opt to include another 10% in indirect costs in the proposed grant budget. The total request would amount to \$9,900 (\$9,000 direct + \$900 indirect). In the same scenario, the total match would need to be at least \$9,900.

Matching Contributions

To be eligible for a grant, the applicant must provide at least an equal (dollar-for-dollar) match for the proposed project. The match may come from another non-federal grant, from the applicant organization, from its partners in the project, or from any combination thereof. All of the match must come from non-federal sources.

The match may consist of real dollars or in-kind (non-cash) contributions of labor, services, materials, equipment, supplies, and/or travel expenses that are necessary and reasonable for the accomplishment of project objectives. Purchases of real property may not be counted as a match. Overhead and general administrative costs are not acceptable matches (but some overhead and general administrative costs may be included as a grant expense per the discussion of indirect costs above). Donated professional services and volunteer labor may be counted as matches.

All sources of matching contributions must be documented at the time of application. This must include a letter signed by the applicant organization's financial officer or authorized representative which documents the amount of matching funds being contributed to the project budget. Matching contributions that have been secured at the time of application are preferred. If the match is pending (e.g., from another grant application), the application should note the date the match is expected to be confirmed.

Any project funded by an MS Coast NHA grant will be required to provide verifiable documentation that matching funds have been spent and that matching in-kind contributions have been received.

Cost Reimbursement

Grant funds are provided on a reimbursement basis that is, grant funds are provided only after project costs are incurred and paid for by the grant recipient during the project period of performance. To request a reimbursement, the grantee must submit a progress report and documentation of paid expenses and matches including receipts, paid invoices, copies of checks and a ledger of expenses charged to the grant. Documentation of in-kind contributions must be itemized to show the amount and value of contributed labor, services, and materials. Additional documentation may be requested.

If there is a compelling need for advance funds to start the project, the applicant may request partial advance payment in the grant application. The MS Coast NHA will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis. Partial advance payments may not exceed 50% of the total grant award. Advance payments that are approved will be made upon signing of the grant agreement.

At the time of the reimbursement request, the recipient must also provide match support in the amount equal to or within 5 % of the amount requested. The final payment will not be processed until the recipient has provided the full amount of the required match.

Electronic payment is required and can be set up through Paymode, by using this link, <http://portal.paymode.com/mississippi>, or by calling 877-443-6944. You will need to follow the steps at each prompt. Setting up a Paymode account will permit DFA to link accounts and this will allow for reimbursement requests to be received in a more timely manner than paper checks.

Grant Application Submittal

1. The deadline for grant applications is **Thursday, March 12, 2026**. If mailed, applications must be postmarked by that date and mailed to:

**Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area
Attention: Joyce Hart
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, MS 39530**

If delivered, applications must be received in our office by the close of business (4:00 pm) on that date. **The MS Coast NHA Offices are in the Charnley-Norwood House located at 509 East Beach Drive, Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39564.**

Submissions can be e-mailed to Heritage@dmr.ms.gov and must be received by close of business at 4:00 p.m. on that date. **Please note that any application that is emailed and time-stamped after 4:00 p.m. will be not accepted.**

2. Please submit the following on 8 ½ by 11-inch paper with your application.
 - a. A completed Project Budget Form. You may provide a line-by-line narrative on a separate page for cost that may require further detail or explanation.
 - b. A letter that documents the amount and type of matching contributions for the project. The letter should be signed by the organization's financial officer or authorized representative. Please include the letter with your application. If your match is pending (e.g., from another grant application), please indicate this and let us know when you expect the match to be confirmed.
 - c. Documentation of the qualifications of the project manager and any other key professional project personnel, including contractors (if known at the time of application) and consulting historians or folklorists. Resumes, lists of relevant project work, or comparable documentation will suffice. Submitting a sample of work may be advisable for documentary, photography, and video projects.

- d. A copy of your organization's annual budget for nonprofit organizations. If your organization expends \$750,000 or more in federal funds (cumulatively) during a fiscal year a copy of the audit is REQUIRED is to be submitted with application.
- e. Letters providing evidence of local support for the project. Letters of support must come from at least three of the following types of entities: art councils or guilds, chambers of commerce, tourism authorities, historic preservation organizations, land conservancies, community colleges/colleges/universities/schools, and state government agencies, regional councils of governments, or local governments.
- f. These letters of support may be included with the application (preferred) or mailed separately (must be posted marked by the application deadline). Please ensure that the letters reference your project with the Project Title you choose for the grant application. While there is no limit to the number of letters of support you may submit, we recommend no more than four.
- g. A copy of the letter from the Internal Revenue Service confirming your organization's tax-exempt status if you are claiming to be tax-exempt.

Terms of Grant Award

1. **Project Manager:** Grant applicants must appoint a Project Manager who will act as the primary contact between the MS Coast NHA and the grantee.
The assigned project manager must have the ability to respond back to a project email or phone call from the MDMR grant project manager or the MDMR grants department within a minimum three (3) business days. The repercussions of continued lack of communication between a grantee and MDMR will be noted in the grant file and could potentially affect the continuation of funding and the eligibility for future allowance of Heritage Community Grant funding.
2. **Notification:** All grant applicants will receive written and email notification regarding grant award decisions on **Tuesday, March 19, 2026.**
3. **Grant Administration Orientation Meeting:** After notification of the grant award, the Project Manager or a designated representative of the grant recipient organization will be required to attend a grant administration orientation meeting virtually or in person at the Charnley-Norwood House, 509 East Beach Drive, Ocean Springs, MS 39564 **TBD, July, 2026.**
4. **Sub-Grant Agreement:** The grant funds will be administered through a sub-grant agreement between the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and the grant

applicant. **The grant award is not official until both parties have signed the sub-grant agreement.**

5. **Effective Project Start Date:** The effective project start date is when the agreement is signed by both parties. At the discretion of the MS Coast NHA Program, expenses incurred prior to the effective project start date may be eligible for reimbursement upon prior approval.
6. **Grant Period:** The grant period will be for up to twelve (12) months from the effective project start date.
7. **Project Changes:** The MS Coast NHA must approve any changes in the scope or timeframe of the agreement prior to the initiation of such changes. Additionally, any changes in budget categories that surpass 10% of the total award require written approval from MDMR.
8. **Grant Acknowledgment:** The grantee will be required to acknowledge the funding support of the MS Coast NHA and to display a sign with such an acknowledgment at the project location, if applicable. The acknowledgment should incorporate the MS Coast NHA logo. Grantees will also be required to acknowledge the MS Coast NHA in all materials announcing the grant award or implementation/completion of the grant project.

Applicants are **required** to notify the MS Coast NHA grant project manager prior to any press releases being disseminated or any kind of media event taking place.

Finally, grantees will also be required to send a letter to their Congressional and State representatives to notify them that their project has received a federal grant award through the MS Coast NHA. A detailed document of all outreach requirements will be provided to grantee as an attachment with the agreement.

9. **Final Reports and Publicity:** Upon completion of the project, the grant recipient will be required to submit a final project report in a standard format provided by the MS Coast NHA Office. Final reports should include an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the project. Grantees may be asked to participate in scheduled media events announcing the completion of the project.
10. **Default Statement:** If the grant recipient is not able to complete the project within the agreed-upon project schedule of twelve (12) months, the grant recipient may apply in writing for a one-time extension of up to six (6) months.
11. **Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) Review:** Projects may require additional review by the State Historic Preservation Office to determine if there may be any adverse impacts to historic or archaeological sites. Applicants may be required to submit more detailed project information, maps, and photographs for this review. If the project is awarded, the MS Coast NHA Historic Preservation Coordinator,

Jeff Rosenberg will be assigned to your project and may serve as a liaison between you and the MDAH Office at no cost.

12. **Grant Monitoring:** To comply with agency transparency and to fulfill the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources grant monitoring requirements, a site visit(s) will be arranged to ensure grant goals are being achieved. Proper notification will be provided in advance for all visits related to the funded project.

Grantee Responsibilities-Federal Regulations

Grant awards from the MS Coast NHA are made with federal funds received from the National Park Service. Because the grant dollars are federal in origin, grant recipients must comply with applicable federal regulations regarding the use and administration of federal funds. These regulations set standards for such administrative activities as procurement and record retention and govern the use of copyrighted work.

Grantees must comply with the Office of Management and Budget's Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirement for Federal Awards (also known as the OMB "Super Circular" or Uniform Guidance"). Grant recipients are subject to 2 CFR Part 200, Subparts A through E for grant administration requirements. These regulations are published as part of the Code of Federal Regulations and can be accessed online at: www.ecfr.gov (Search for Title 2-Grants and Agreements, and then select Part 200-Uniform Administrative Requirements).

In the Uniform Guidance, grantees are considered sub-recipients, while the MS Coast NHA is considered a recipient and a pass-through entity.

These circulars can be downloaded from the White House website:
www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars

Grantees must also:

- Comply with all applicable federal laws including but not limited to Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act, Secretary of Interior Standards, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. More information can be found on the following webpages:
<https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/section-106-process/introduction-section-106>
<http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/>
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nepa/policy.htm>
<http://www.ada.gov/>

- Have an audit performed that meets the requirements of OMB Circular A-133 and/or 2 CRF Part 200, Subpart F whenever \$750,000 or more in federal funds is expended (cumulatively) during a fiscal year and provide a copy of the audit to the MS Coast NHA.
- Allow inspection of program records and the project by the MS Coast NHA and authorized federal agencies during the project and for up to three years following project completion.

Additional Federal Regulations

Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: Provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (Section 601).

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: Provides that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any programs or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975: Provides that no otherwise qualified person in the United States shall, on the grounds of age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Provides that no otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, or denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Fair Labor Standards Act: All personnel employed on projects or productions which are financed in whole or in part through federal financial assistance will be paid not less than the minimum compensation as determined by the Secretary of Labor in Parts 3, 5, 505 of Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. No part of any project shall be performed or engaged in underworking conditions that are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to the health and safety of the employees engaged in the project.

The Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988: Requires that employees of the grantee not engage in unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of controlled substances in the grantee's workplace or work site.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Section 106 (g): Provides that during the period of time that the award is in effect, grant recipients and their employees may not engage in severe forms of trafficking in persons, procure a commercial sex act, or use forced labor in the performance of the award.

Information and Assistance:

If you have questions about the Heritage Community Grant program, please contact:

MS Coast National Heritage Area

Attention: Jeff Rosenberg

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Physical Address: 509 East Beach Drive Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Mailing Address: 1141 Bayview Avenue Biloxi, MS 39530

Heritage@dmr.ms.gov

(228) 523-4029

Application and letters of support should be addressed to:

MS Coast National Heritage Area

Attention: Joyce Hart

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Physical Address: 509 East Beach Drive Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Mailing Address: 1141 Bayview Avenue Biloxi, MS 39530

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