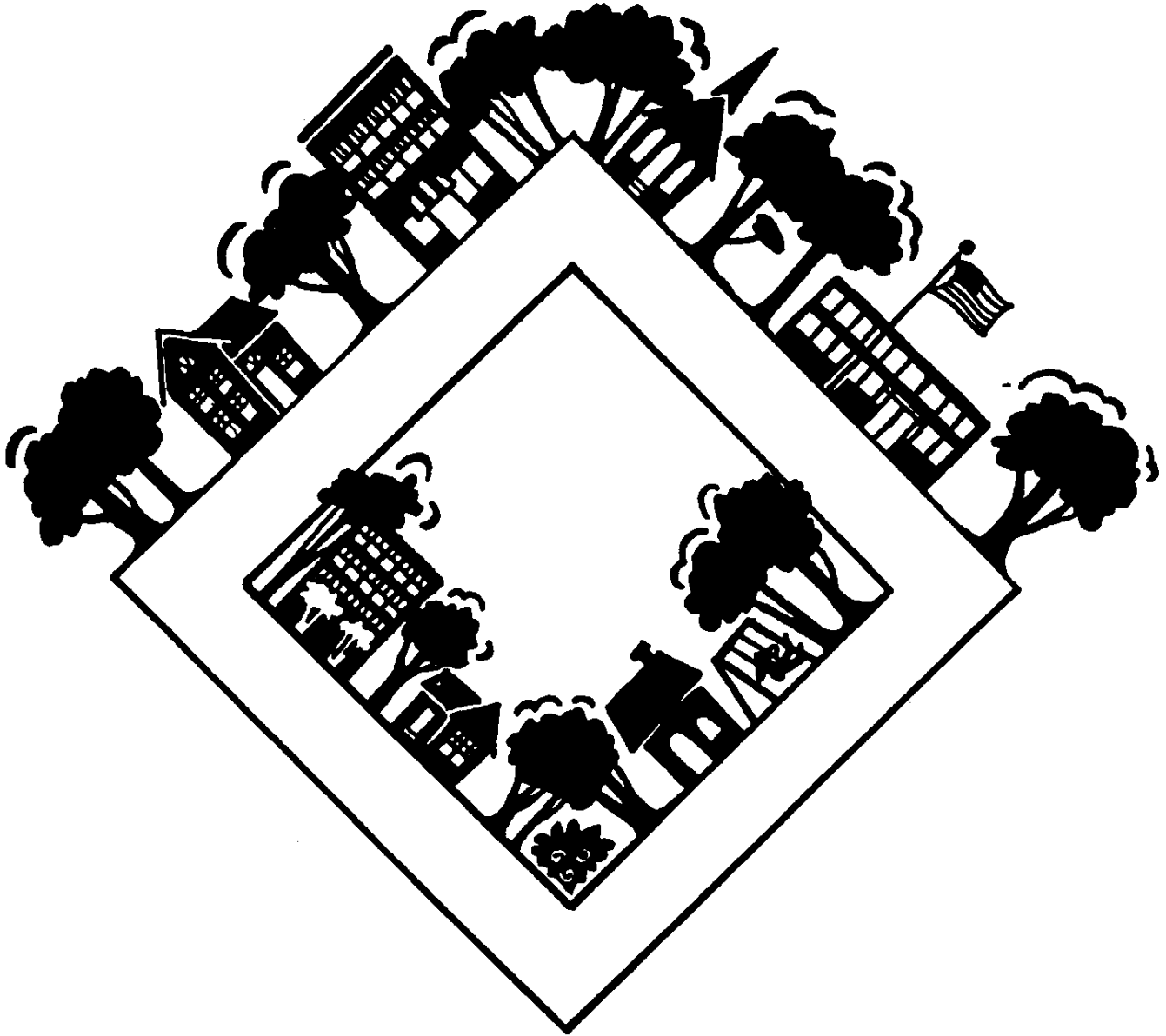


Mississippi Forestry Commission
2009 Urban & Community Forestry
Assistance Challenge Grant Program



Proposal Information Package
Application Deadline: Postmarked August 3, 2009

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2009 Challenge Grant Program

Introduction

Congress has authorized funding for the Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Program. The purpose is to aid in the development of long-term, self-sustaining urban and community forestry programs. The urban forest is made up of trees and associated vegetation, and includes structures, people and the ways they interact. Urban forestry is the management of the urban forest for the benefits it provides and understanding the problems that are inherent in having trees, structures and people together. The urban forest provides environmental, social, health and economic benefits beyond the aesthetic values commonly attributed to trees. The challenge grant program aims to help people do a better job of managing the urban forest.

The ultimate goal of the Urban and Community Forestry Program is to inspire or enhance local or statewide urban and community forestry programs. Emphasis is also placed on increasing local capacity, volunteer involvement, planning, training and continuing education, projects that provide the most outcome for the dollars spent.

Funds are available on a 50 percent federal, 50 percent non-federal matching basis through competitive grant proposals.

Eligibility

Grants may be awarded to state and local units of government, non-profit organizations, or educational institutions.

Fundable Projects

Examples of projects will be found in the section titled **"2009 priority emphasis areas have been established"**

Proposals may include a combination of activities. **Non-fundable** project items include construction, large equipment purchases, food, gifts, memberships, land purchase, land payments, funds to prepare the grant application, and projects done to benefit private property. Grant funds may not be used as a substitute for existing budgets.

Cost-Share Requirements

The federal funds may not exceed 50 percent of the total project cost and shall be provided on a matching basis. Federal funds will be distributed as reimbursement to the grantee for eligible cash expenditures only. The non-federal share may be in the form of cash, services, or in-kind contributions. No other federal source may be used as a match. Costs and third party in-kind contributions counting toward satisfying a matching requirement must be verifiable from sub-recipient records. (In-kind contributions are a volunteer's time, cash or materials that are donated to complete a project.)

Funding Range

We will accept applications for projects up to \$20,000 (federal share). Larger amounts may be considered.

Submitting a Proposal

Written proposals should be submitted in the attached application format. Additional pages may be added if necessary. The proposal should clearly state how the applicant intends to address a specific urban forestry need. No binders or covers please. Proposals should be stapled in the upper left corner.

Proposal Submission and Project Completion Dates

Project proposals must be received postmarked by August 3, 2009. **One (3) copies and one (1) original** of the proposal should be submitted to the Mississippi Forestry Commission Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator, 301 N. Lamar Street, Suite 300, Jackson, MS 39201. If you have questions, contact: rolson@mfc.state.ms.us or (601) 359-2856. **Projects must be completed by June 30, 2010.**

Project Evaluation

Proposals will undergo a two-step evaluation process. The first level review will be done by the Regional Urban Forestry Coordinators.

The second level review will be carried out by State Office of the Mississippi Forestry Commission. The criteria listed below may be used to evaluate each proposal. Not all criteria will be applicable to each project; however, these are the standards that will guide decision making for the competitive grants program in Mississippi.

Evaluation criteria include:

- ❖ Application of the project to program objectives
- ❖ Completeness of application
- ❖ Eligibility of applicant
- ❖ Existing funding availability
- ❖ Is the local urban forestry program initiated or enhanced?
- ❖ Reduction of impacts and/or enhancement to the urban ecosystem
- ❖ Awareness of the benefits of trees, forests, and of urban forest management is improved
- ❖ Demonstrated need for the project
- ❖ Goal oriented (A project should be a tangible step toward long -term goals.)
- ❖ Appropriate proposed time frame for completion includes a clear beginning, middle, and end within the plan of operation and thereby contributes to the ease of program evaluation
- ❖ Cost effectiveness is important to ensure that program money is spent wisely and the long-term benefit is worth the investment.
- ❖ Local budget commitment and support is necessary to ensure at least the 50-50 match required by the program is met.
- ❖ Volunteer involvement (Because the urban and community forestry program has at its heart volunteerism and partnerships)
- ❖ Project contribution to the environment
- ❖ Technical accuracy (appropriate species to site match, acceptable planting technique, species diversity included, emphasis on plant quality, a commitment to maintenance of the project, etc.,)
- ❖ Continuing program effect includes local commitment to follow-up activities and program life beyond the implementation phase
- ❖ Visibility (Public involvement and local support are important aspects of the Urban & Community Forestry Grant program)

2009 Priority Emphasis Areas

1. Grantees are encouraged to do larger projects of state-wide significance such as training, publications, or research that could be used to provide information on a state-wide basis.
2. Projects that will help a city hire an urban forester, develop a tree ordinance, develop a tree board, or conduct an urban forest inventory on public property will have the highest priority for funding.
3. Tree planting and demonstration projects will have the lowest priority for funding.

Note: We will still consider projects outside the priority emphasis areas, if funds are available. *The Mississippi Forestry Commission maintains sole discretion to fund a project of merit.*

Reports and Requests for Payment

The program administrator may require periodic reports from the grantee as to the progress of specific projects.

Grant payments will be made after the project is completed and a request for payment filed. All project expenses must be documented and approved. A final report will be required which documents accomplishments, total expenditures and other information pertinent to the specific project.

Federal Regulations

Grantees must comply with all federal regulations pertaining to federal grants including, but not limited to the following:

State or Local Government-

Sections 3015, 3016, and 3017 of the Code of Federal Regulations
OMB Circular A-87

Educational Institutions-

Section 3015 and 3017 of the Code of Federal Regulations
OMB Circular A-21

Non-profit Organizations-

Section 3015 and 3017 of the Code of Federal Regulations
OMB Circular A-122

Upon notification of approval for financial assistance, recipients will be assigned a maximum dollar amount of funding approved. Recipients will sign a Contract of Agreement with the Mississippi Forestry Commission, a Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions (Form AD-1047), an Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424); Assurances - Non-construction Programs (Form 424B), a Certification Regarding Drug-free Workplace (Form AD-1049); and a Certification for Contracts, Loans and Cooperative Agreements.

Auditable Records

Records will be maintained by the grant recipient according to all federal regulations. The financial management system of the grantees shall meet the following standards:

- ❖ Records shall comply with generally accepted accounting principles.
- ❖ Records will document allowable costs. The Mississippi Forestry Commission must concur with the values placed on services and materials.
- ❖ Records will be supported by source documentation such as canceled checks (photo copies acceptable), paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records, contracts, etc. Invoices must be marked paid and be referenced as to how payment was made (e.g. check number).
- ❖ Records will be maintained for a minimum of three years following final payment.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is available to potential grantees through the Mississippi Forestry Commission. E-mail: rolson@mfc.state.ms.us or call (601) 359-2856 if you need assistance.

2009 Challenge Grant Program Application

Applicant Name: _____
(Name of Organization)

Federal Identification Number: _____

Name of Primary Contact Person: _____

Complete Address: _____

Telephone Number: _() _____ FAX _() _____

E-mail Address (if available): _____

Project Timetable:

Starting Date _____

Ending Date _____

Project Cost:

Grant Funds Requested: \$ _____

Local Match to be Provided: \$ _____

Total Project Cost: \$ _____

Authorized Signature

Date

GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The following items may be used as guidelines for developing the grant proposal
(Be sure to attach the grant application on page 5 as the cover sheet for your proposal)

- I. **Goals:** State the overall goal for undertaking this project even if the project plays only a minor role in achieving that goal. What local concerns will this project address?
- II. **Project Methods/Procedures/Plan:** This section is the applicant's detailed narrative of how the project will be accomplished. Describe major activities and procedures. Include a timetable for accomplishing activities and for project completion.
- III. **Technical Aspects:** Describe the technical criteria under which your project will be implemented (examples: tree selection and planting specifications, 3-year maintenance plan including responsibility, pruning standards, tree preservation criteria, license requirements, training criteria, etc.).
- IV **Partnerships:** List groups or other organizations that will be involved in carrying out your project. Show the roles that each will play. Include training plans for volunteers.
- V. **Administration and staffing:** Identify key individuals who will be involved in project administration, implementation and record keeping. Briefly describe their role and qualifications.
- VI. **Visibility and impact:** Describe how the project will be used to impact public awareness of urban forestry or otherwise increase the level of support for urban forestry programs.
- VII. **Project budget:** Include a breakdown of project costs including non-federal, federal and total project costs. Note source of non-federal match. Be sure to list specific items and activities with costs. Attach letters of commitment from funding sources other than the applicant. See page 2 for non-fundable items. Budget must be reasonable, detailed, complete, and easily understood.
- VIII. **Project continuation and/or local impact:** Describe future use and/or impacts of the project once the grant funding has ended. Include project contribution to the local urban forestry program.
- IX. **Project sponsors and endorsements:** Include names and signatures of supporting and participating project personnel. Commitment letters and resolutions are also good ways to show project support.

