



Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program

2026 - 2027

Conserve Georgia

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program

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Suite 1370 East Tower
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Updated 4/15/2026

Preface: 2026-2027 Grant Cycle

Georgia voters made evident their desire for a funding mechanism dedicated to securing the future of our critical natural resources. In 2018, 83% of voters authorized the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act. Following that, numerous partners, organizations, contributors, and citizens collaborated with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) to offer the inaugural funding cycle of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. This program consists of grants, known as Conserve Georgia Grants, and loans made available to local governments, certain nongovernmental organizations, and state government agencies.

Prospective projects will undergo a web-based, multi-phase, competitive application process submitted to GADNR, which opens August 3, 2026.

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 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act.

Note: This booklet does not contain all materials and forms needed to apply for GOSP assistance. Applicants should visit the GOSP Homepage to access all current application materials and forms. These can be accessed at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Funding

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act dedicates 40% of existing State sales and use taxes on outdoor sporting goods to fund stewardship projects for existing state and local parks, acquire and develop new state and local parks, and acquire and protect new lands critical to the protection of our wildlife and clean water supplies. Each year's official funding amount will be announced shortly before the funding cycle begins. These funds are available without raising or enacting any new taxes.

Support

GA DNR staff are available to help guide applicants through the process associated with successfully submitting a complete grant or loan application. The best source of information in preparing an application is this manual used in conjunction with the resources found at www.gadnr.org/gosp. You may also contact the GOSP Grant Specialist who can explain the program in detail, help determine eligibility, and provide assistance to make an application as competitive as possible.

Quick Facts

Program Name	Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program
Funding Allocation	Dependent on State sales and use tax collected by sporting goods stores
Eligible Applicants	Qualified local governments; Constituted recreation authorities; State agencies; and certain nongovernmental entities
Permissible Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stewardship and acquisition projects that support local parks and trails - Stewardship projects that improve and maintain state owned land and facilities - Acquisition projects that protect critical conservation areas
Minimum Conserve Georgia Grant Amount	<p>Local Parks & Trails Projects: \$500,000</p> <p>State Projects: No min. amount</p>
Maximum Conserve Georgia Grant Amount	<p>Local Parks & Trails Projects: \$3,000,000</p> <p>State Projects: No max. amount</p>
Match Requirements	25% Match Required (Minimum)
Retainage	25% held
Grant Term	2 years

Funding Cycle 2026-2027 Timeline

The application process consists of two phases. The Pre-application is an initial submission of projects plans and funding needs. After the project evaluation process, successful Pre-applicants will be invited to a Second-level application which primarily consists of higher level, greater detailed information requirements. All invitees will receive funding pending a fully completed Second-level Application. The application deadline schedule for this cycle is as follows:

Pre-application deadline: October 16, 2026

Second-level Application deadline (if invited): May 28, 2027

The 2026-2027 funding cycle timeline is as follows:

- August 3, 2026: Pre-application period opens
- October 16, 2026: Pre-applications due
- October 17 - December 2026: GADNR staff reviews, evaluates, and ranks Pre-applications
- January - spring 2027: Proposal of Conservation Projects approved by the GOSP Board of Trustees, Board of Natural Resources and the Appropriations Subcommittees of the State House and Senate over GADNR and GEFA
Note: Meeting dates for the January Board of Trustees and Board of Natural Resources meetings will be publicly noticed at www.gadnr.org/gosp.
- Spring 2027: All Pre-applicants are notified of results, and selected Pre-applicants are invited to Second-level application
- May 28, 2027: Second-level applications due
- Summer 2027: Financial workshops conducted for successful applicants
- Summer 2027: Project Agreements anticipated to be signed

Contact Information

To better assist Georgia residents in attaining their recreation and conservation goals, the GOSP team is available through the following contact information during normal business hours. All general information or procedural inquiries should be sent to the GOSP Grant Specialist.

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Section 1: Overview and Process

1.1 Program Overview

The purpose of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program 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. This mission is accomplished through the distribution of funds through the Conserve Georgia Grant and low interest loans.

1.2 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Georgia 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 the Board of Natural Resources, shall evaluate the proposals in accordance with priorities established by the Board of Trustees. There shall be 11 Trustees as follows:

- (1) The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, who shall also serve as Chairperson of the Board;
- (2) The Director of the State Forestry Commission;
- (3) The Director of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Department of Natural Resources;
- (4) The Commissioner of the Department of Transportation;
- (5) The Director of the Coastal Resources Division of the Department of Natural Resources, as an ex officio, nonvoting member;
- (6) The Director of the Wildlife Resources Division of the Department of Natural Resources, as an ex officio, nonvoting member;
- (7) The Director of State Parks & Historic Sites Division of the Department of Natural Resources, as an ex officio, nonvoting member;
- (8) (A) Two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
(B) Two members appointed by the President of the Senate.

2026-2027 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund Board of Trustees



Walter Rabon, Chairman
Commissioner of the Georgia
Department of Natural Resources



Jeff Cown
Director of the
Environmental Protection
Division



Russell McMurry
Commissioner of the Department
of Transportation



Johnny Sabo
Director of the State Forestry
Commission



Bo Butler
Lt. Governor Appointee
(Term expires on 06/30/2025)



Eddie Canon
Speaker of the House Appointee
(Term expires on 06/30/2025)



Aaron McWhorter
Lt. Governor Appointee
(Term expires on 06/30/2025)



Truitt Eavenson
Speaker of the House Appointee
(Current term expires on 07/20/2027)

Ex-Officio Nonvoting Members



Angie Johnson
Director of the State Parks &
Historic Sites Division



Chris Harper
Director of the Wildlife Resources
Division



Doug Haymans
Director of the Coastal Resources
Division

Section 2: Policies

2.1 Conserve Georgia Grant Funding Basics

Funding Amount

Conserve Georgia grant and loan requests have a \$500,000 minimum and are limited to a maximum award of \$3,000,000.

There is no minimum or maximum grant request amounts for the projects submitted by State agencies.

Reimbursement Payments

GOSP functions primarily as a reimbursement program for Conserve Georgia grant recipients. 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 to GOSP 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 GADNR. All reporting responsibilities must still be adhered to throughout the entirety of the project.

Expenses directly related to the project scope but incurred prior to the Project Agreement effective date are not reimbursable. Appraisals, project design, environmental compliance reviews, and grant writing expenses may be counted **as match only** if incurred within 18 months of the close of the second level application. Furthermore, the aggregate of these match items may not to exceed 15% of the total project cost. These expenses are subject to GADNR approval on a case-by-case basis. See Section 2.3A for eligible expenses that may be reimbursed.

Matching Requirements

Conserve Georgia grant funds can reimburse up to 75% of a project's total cost. Grantees must provide at least 25% of the total project cost as match, either in the form of cash or in-kind match. The exact match requirement for individual projects will be determined by an approved Project Budget and identified in the Project Agreement (see Section 2.5 for eligible match items)

Retainage

GOSP will retain 25% of each reimbursement request. Once the project is complete and all required documentation is submitted and approved, the retainage will be released to the grantee following a final audit and inspection by GADNR.

2.2 Applicant Eligibility

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

Eligible Applicants include:

- Qualified local governments as defined in paragraph 18 of subsection (a) of O.C.G.A. 50-8-2:
A county or municipality which:
 - (A) Has a comprehensive plan in conformity with the minimum standards and procedures;
 - (B) Has made its local plan implementation mechanisms consistent with those established in its comprehensive plan and with the minimum standards and procedures;
 - (C) Has not failed to participate in the department's mediation or other means of resolving conflicts in a manner which, in the judgment of the department, reflects a good faith effort to resolve any conflict; and
 - Must be in good standing with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

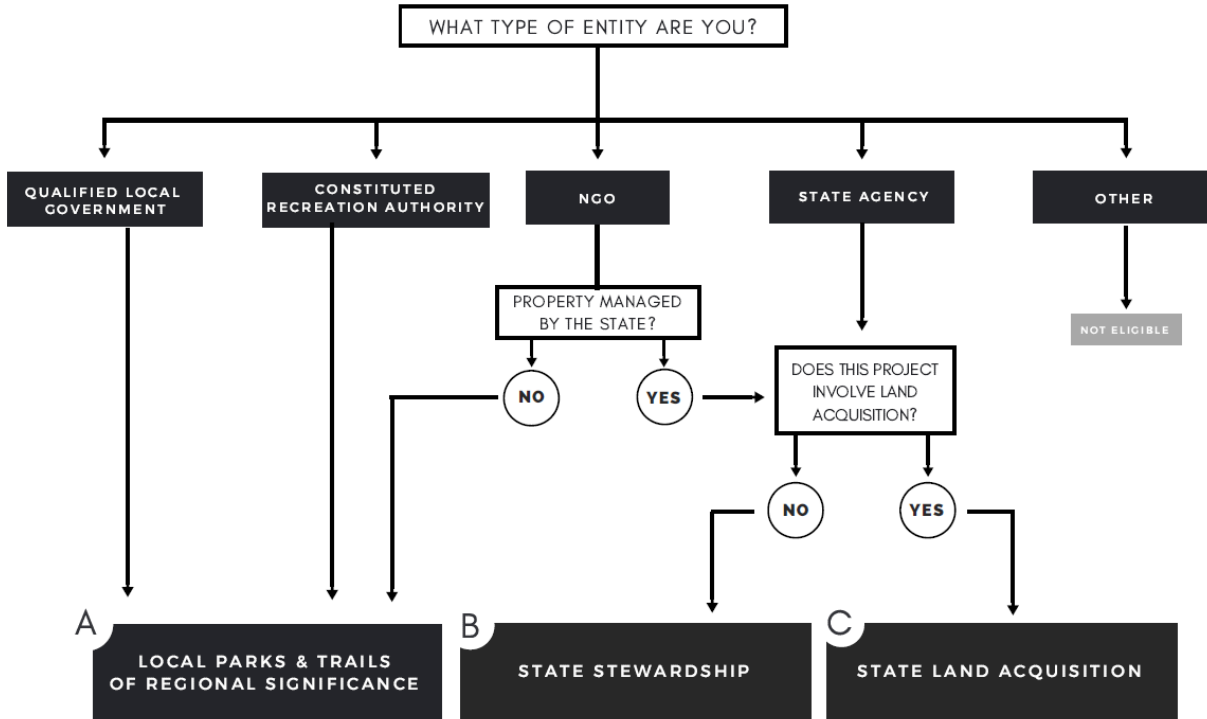
Note: Applicants may contact DCA to verify if they have met these criteria and are thus currently in good standing. The current DCA compliance report can be found at <https://apps.dca.ga.gov/LocalGovStatus/planning.asp>.

- Constituted recreation authorities registered with DCA
- State agencies
- Nongovernmental entities, defined as any nonprofit organization **on file with the Secretary of State Office** primarily concerned with the protection and conservation of land and natural resources, as evidenced by its organizational documents.

2.3 Project Eligibility

Since no two projects are exactly alike, GOSP projects will be funneled into one of three distinct project types. This ensures that each project can compete fairly with other closely related projects, while allowing the Board of Trustees to address the wide array of priorities for any given funding cycle.

The flow chart below is provided to further explain the three GOSP application paths and assist applicants in identifying the proper application to complete:



The three GOSP project types are:

A. Local Parks and Trails of State and Regional Significance

These funding opportunities are specially reserved for **local governments, constituted recreation authorities, and nongovernmental entities** to acquire and/or improve **local** parks, trails, and conservation lands. The Local Parks and Trails of State and Regional Significance Application shall be used to apply for any of the three distinct projects below:

- **Acquisition** of property, to include conservation easements
- **Stewardship** to include development, improvement, maintenance, or restoration projects
- **Combination projects** that involve both the acquisition of land, either through fee-simple or conservation easement purchase **AND** maintenance, restoration or improvement for the land acquired

Note: Local governments and constituted recreation authorities MAY NOT apply for state stewardship or state acquisition grants.

B. State Stewardship

State stewardship funding opportunities are available for **State agencies and nongovernmental entities only**. These entities may apply for maintenance, restoration, or improvement projects to enhance public access, use or safe enjoyment of permanently protected conservation land and current state-owned parks.

Local governments and constituted recreation authorities MAY NOT apply for state stewardship grants.

C. State Land Acquisition

State Land Acquisitions funding opportunities are available for **State agencies and nongovernmental entities only**. These agencies may apply to acquire critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, for military installation buffering or for natural resource based outdoor recreation. The State Land Acquisition Application shall be used to apply for either of the two distinct projects below:

- Acquisitions of property, to include conservation easements.
- **Combination projects** that involve both the acquisition of land, either through fee-simple or conservation easement purchases, **AND** for the maintenance, restoration or improvement of the lands or conservation easements acquired.

Local governments and constituted recreation authorities MAY NOT apply for state acquisition grants.

Note: *All aspects of proposed projects and property acquisitions must be located entirely within the State of Georgia. Applications for projects in which any portion of the project or acquisition is located outside of Georgia, whether in part or in whole, will not be considered for funding.*

2.4 Items Eligible for Reimbursement

Below are the most typical items which may be submitted for reimbursement. To qualify for reimbursement, expenditures must be directly related to the project and have occurred after the signed Project Agreement date, but before the maximum 24-month project completion period. All costs must be reasonable and support responsible financial stewardship principles. The Board of Trustees and GADNR 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 the appraised fair market value)
 - Independent appraisal reviews as required by GADNR
 - Legal fees directly associated with the conveyance of real property or conservation easements
 - Expenses directly related to the acquisition of real property or conservation easements
 - Environmental reviews conducted after signing the project agreement with DNR
- Permits
- Small equipment cost in the form of small hand tools directly related to construction/development
- Direct materials
- Contractual services such as:
 - Surveys
 - Architectural and Engineering **limited to no more than 15% of the grant value ***
 - Environmental reviews, planning and consulting conducted after signing the project agreement with DNR (**Most other consulting services are not eligible. Contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for guidance.**)
 - Contractors and subcontractors directly related to the project scope
- Contingency - Limited to 15% of the grant value **

* Applicants may include Design & Architectural (D&A) costs on the budget _reimbursable and match_ limited to 15% of the total project cost. **Reimbursable portion of D&A must not exceed 15% of the requested grant amount.**

Applicants may include contingency on the budget _reimbursable and match_ limited to 15% of the total project cost. **Reimbursable portion of contingency must not exceed 15% of the requested grant amount.

If unsure whether an expenditure is eligible for reimbursement, contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for verification prior to submission.

2.5 Items Eligible for Match

Applicants are required to provide matching funds equal to at least 25% of the total project cost, although Applicants are encouraged to provide more. Higher levels of match commitment will yield higher point awards on the Pre-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 after the agreement effective date, but before the maximum 24-month project completion period expiration. The only exceptions to this are appraisals, project planning and engineering, grant writing, and environmental compliance reviews, not to exceed 15% of the total project cost, and within 18 months of the close of the second level, which may be counted as **match only**. 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 \$11.40 /hour. Applicants must use the Georgia 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_ga.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 GADNR 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.

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 GADNR until the Grantee's total match commitment is reconciled per the Agreement. Shortfalls in match will be reconciled by means of the project retainage.

2.6 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 the GOSP Grant Specialist for verification prior to incurring such costs. Examples of ineligible costs may include:

- Indirect costs
- Heavy Equipment and large tools
- Travel
- Incidental costs
- Ribbon-cutting/inaugurating ceremony costs
- Meals
- Expenditures prior to or after the approved Project Agreement start and end dates, except for those items outlined in Section 2.1
- Administrative labor costs of internal staff
- Maintenance of equipment

Note: Most consulting services are not eligible. Contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for guidance.

2.7 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 90 days and approved or disapproved by GADNR staff. Subsequent extensions or extensions in excess of 90 days shall be reviewed by the GADNR staff and a recommendation of action will be forwarded to the Chairperson of the GOSA Board of Trustees. The Chairperson and/or the Board may either approve or disapprove the extension. 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. All extension requests must be submitted to the GOSP Grants team via email.

Change of Scope

Grantees may request to change the scope of the original project. Requests will be reviewed by GADNR staff and presented to the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund. 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. All changes of scope requests must be submitted to the GOSP Grants team via email.

GADNR Grants staff will make every effort to present requests to the Board at the next scheduled meeting, although the timing of submissions and Board schedules may delay review until subsequent meetings. For this reason, Grantees should heavily consider the need for such requests in order to minimize project delays.

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 GADNR. Incurring these costs prior to an approved Project Agreement Amendment will be done at the Grantee's own risk.

2.8 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 report prepared by a licensed appraiser in accordance with current State guidelines is required for the Pre-application phase.

Applicants will be required to submit second full narrative appraisal during the Second-level Application if invited.

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

- 1) Applicants will complete one appraisal during the Pre-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 Member Appraisal Institute (MAI) certified appraiser.
- 2) Applicant will be required to submit a second full narrative appraisal during the Second-level Application if invited.
- 3) At least one of the two appraisals will be reviewed by an outside review appraiser assigned by GADNR.
- 4) Costs incurred by the independent appraiser are eligible for GOSP reimbursement, and subject to all GOSP 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 GADNR.

All appraisals are subject to an independent appraisal review **for Applicants who are invited to the Second-level Application stage only**. This is required by GADNR to ensure compliance with appraisal standards and consistency with current fair market value. GADNR will assign the independent reviewer and forward the appraisals to the reviewer on behalf of the Applicant.

This service incurs a cost; however, independent appraisal reviews are eligible for reimbursement under GOSP. Applicants should expect an invoice directly from the independent reviewer and must make payment directly to the reviewer.

Once this review has been concluded, GADNR will update the Applicant on whether each 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. The GOSP Grant Specialist will record accepted appraisals in the application portal once all 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 in order to achieve acceptance.

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

2.9 Project Types

Loans

From within the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund, moneys may also be made available in each fiscal year for loans to any qualified applicant to defray the costs of conservation land or of conservation easements placed upon property that ensure its permanent protection as conservation land. Any such loan shall bear interest at a rate established by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority. Contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for more information concerning loans.

Acquisition Projects

The acquisition of property may be in the form of fee-simple acquisition, conservation easement, donation, or lease. Leases must extend for a minimum of 25 years beyond the Project Agreement date.

GOSP grant funds may be used only for eligible acquisition costs associated with fee-simple acquisition or qualifying conservation easements. However, donated property may be considered as match if properly documented and approved by the Department.

Land acquisitions for local assistance must occur in accordance with all applicable state and federal guidelines including requirements governing appraisals, and eligible transaction costs (see Section 2.1). The following are key requirements regarding grant-funded land acquisitions:

- **Condemnation/Eminent Domain:** Acquisitions must occur on a willing-seller willing-buyer basis. State law prohibits the expenditure of grant funds for acquisition of property acquired via condemnation.

- **Property Value:** Awards for land acquisition (and property used as match) shall be based on the appraised value or the actual purchase price, whichever is less, and must not exceed the fair market value as authenticated by the independent appraisal review.

- **Eligible Costs:** Eligible acquisition costs include the fair market value of the property/actual purchase price and real estate transaction costs (e.g. appraisal review costs, land surveys, legal fees, etc.).

- **Pre-Award Property Acquisition:** No land may be acquired prior to the award of grant funds. Acquisition costs incurred prior to grant award are generally ineligible for reimbursement, unless the Applicant receives a formal letter of retroactivity from GADNR.

Applicants may formally request a letter of retroactivity and may undertake acquisition activities at their own risk after submitting a Pre-application.

Costs incurred prior to grant award may only be considered for reimbursement if the project is selected for funding and all program requirements are fully met. The Department reserves the right to deny reimbursement for any pre-award costs.

Retroactive eligibility does not confer any competitive advantage. All retroactive acquisitions must comply with the appraisal, due diligence, and documentation standards in effect at the time of application.

Approval of a retroactivity request is subject to Board of Trustees review. Applicants who anticipate acquiring property prior to grant award should contact the GOSP Program Coordinator to request a letter. Each request will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis.

Notes for Local Parks and Trails of Regional Significance Projects to be considered for retroactive eligibility:

- The property acquisition (closing) must occur after the official opening date of the applicable funding cycle; and within the same funding cycle for which the application is submitted.
- Requests must demonstrate that acquisition cannot be delayed without jeopardizing the project.
- Approval is not guaranteed and depends on Board of Trustees' priorities and approval.
- Approved retroactivity letters are valid only for the funding cycle for which they are issued.
- Pre-award costs are incurred at the sole risk of the applicant and do not create any obligation on the part of the Department or the Board.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements qualify for GOSP 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.
- Consistency with the Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) priorities, State Parks & Historic Sites Division 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 Pre-application for Conservation Easement Purchase or Donation:

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

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

- Subdividing without GADNR or Board of Trustees approval
- 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.

Stewardship Projects

Funding for stewardship projects is based on costs associated with the activities outlined in the application. For stewardship projects supported by GOSP 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 GOSP funding.

Combination Projects

A Combination Project includes both the acquisition of a property, and stewardship component for the property once acquired. Both aspects should be clearly described in the application narrative criteria.

2.10 Regional Significance

GOSP 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 Georgia'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 Georgia's natural resources, while providing value to a greater community beyond the local area.

2.11 Control

Grantees must maintain adequate control over any land acquired or developed with GOSP funds. Adequate control may be defined as ownership, conservation easement, use agreement, or lease. Lease agreements 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 Pre-application phase. 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 (this document is to be procured by the applicant) will suffice.

2.12 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 GOSP 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. GOSP funds shall not be awarded to projects aimed at generating general revenue.
- Perpetuity language for acquisitions – Real property or conservation easements acquired with GOSP 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 GADNR required Protective Language:

Note: This Protective Language is also available at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

“The Property was acquired in part using grant funds provided to [the Grantee] by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources pursuant to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act, specifically Conserve Georgia 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 Georgia 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 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund Board of Trustees.”

Section 3: Application Process

3.1 Grant Application Process

GOSP annual Conserve Georgia grant and loan opportunities are administered through a competitive application process consisting of three distinct funding pools and a fully online application system.

Paper application submissions will not be accepted or considered for funding.

Funding levels and priorities for each funding pool are established by the Board of Trustees and may vary from year to year. The three funding pools are: Local Parks and Trails of State and Regional Significance, State Stewardship, and State Land Acquisition.

The process for securing GOSP funding begins with the completion of the Pre-application, available at gadnr.org/gosp. During this initial phase, applicants describe the proposed project scope, respond to administrative and qualitative criteria questions, and submit the required project documentation needed by GADNR to evaluate and rank projects.

After GADNR staff review and rank all complete Pre-applications, the Board of Trustees will review the submissions and select projects to advance to the invitation-only Second-level Application, also available at GOSP Program website. All Applicants invited to submit a Second-level Application will receive funding, pending submission of a complete and approved application.

During the Second-level Application phase, Applicants must provide more detailed project information than was included in the Pre-application. Applicants must also submit required environmental reviews and any legal or supporting documentation required by GADNR.

Second-level Applications must be submitted by midnight on the prescribed deadline date. All Applications will be reviewed by GADNR staff for completeness and compliance with program requirements. Applicants who are unable to meet all requirements by the deadline may be granted an extension at the discretion of GADNR.

Upon completion and approval of the Second-level Application, GADNR will schedule mandatory Financial Workshops for grantees to provide guidance regarding reimbursement requirements, reporting procedures, and long-term project obligations.

Following the Financial Workshops, grantees and GADNR will execute a Project Agreement, signifying completion of the application process and authorization for the project to proceed.

3.2 Pre-application

The Pre-application is the initial stage of the funding application process. Because GOSP is a competitive program, this stage serves as the basis for determining which projects advance towards approval. Pre-applications are evaluated using weighted grading criteria, resulting in a cumulative score that is reviewable by GADNR and the Board of Trustees. Highest-ranked applicants advance to the Second-level Application.

Pre-applications must be submitted by midnight on the specified deadline date. All submissions are reviewed by GADNR staff to verify applicant eligibility, and application completeness. Eligible applications are then scored and ranked based on the evaluation criteria and funding cycle priorities.

Specific instructions for satisfying these requirements are provided within the Pre-application portal. The Pre-application must be completed and submitted online at www.gadnr.org/gosp. All eligible Pre-applications must include:

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

- **Pre-application Cover Letter** - This official letter demonstrates the entity's support and authorization to submit a pre-application. The letter must be printed on official organizational letterhead and signed by a ranking authorized representative of the entity (Board Chairperson, Commissioner, Mayor, etc.).
- **Preliminary Site Plan and/or Conceptual Plan** - This may be an artist's or engineer's rendering that visually represents the proposed project. All project elements must be clearly shown, and any elements receiving GOSP funding **MUST** be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be depicted.

(This document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.)

- **Property Boundary Map** - This map must depict the official boundary, as committed to by the Applicant and will be considered the Project Site. All project elements must be located within this Boundary.
For acquisition projects, the Property Boundary must encompass the entire parcel(s) receiving GOSP funding. For stewardship projects, the boundary may be limited to only the portion of the parcel(s) impacted by the proposed project.

(This document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.)

- **Project Location Map** - This map should depict the general location of the Project Site in relation to nearby towns, cities and major highways. It will be used by GADNR staff to locate and visit the Project Site. Common mapping tools such as Google Maps may be used to create this map.

(This document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.)

Minimum requirements for an acceptable project location map:

- Project title and applicant names
- Project Site address (GPS coordinates may be used if no address is assigned)
- At least one nearby significant town
- Major highway designations and the street names immediately surrounding or leading to the Project Site
- North Arrow

- **Photos of the site with photo key** - Photographs of the Project Site must be provided along with a corresponding map (photo key) indicating the location of each photograph. Each photo location must be numbered to match its corresponding photograph, and include an arrow indicating the direction of view from the photographer's perspective.

(This document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.)

- **Generalized Project Budget Worksheet** - Budget is a critical component of the application. The worksheet must include all categories of project expenditures and be sufficiently detailed to reflect the full scope of the project, including both reimbursable costs and match contributions. Only the categories and amounts included in this budget will be considered for reimbursement.

Applicants must ensure that all project costs are clearly categorized. Omissions or inconsistencies may result in ineligible expenses or delays in application review.

(This is a downloadable template that must be completed and uploaded into the application portal. The template is available at www.qadnr.org/qosp)

- **A resolution adopted by the governing entity of the Applicant authorizing the application and committing all funds required to complete the proposed project.**

(This document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.)

- **Proof of Site Control (Ownership / Lease / Easement Documentation)** - Applicants must provide documentation demonstrating legal control of the Project Site. Acceptable documentation includes deed(s), lease agreement(s), and/or easement(s) for all parcels associated with the proposed project.

- **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 document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.)

- **Letters of financial commitment from sponsors and partners**
(This document is created by the applicant and must be 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 Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for direction on attaining approval for use as needed. Failure to do so may cause delays in the in the execution of the Project Agreement.
- **Appraisals** (Acquisition or real property donation only. See section 2.1 and 2.3E) – Subject to GADNR independent appraisal review. See section 2.1

Note: Pre-applications must be submitted by the deadline stated in the public announcement or they will not be eligible.

3.3 Pre-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.

Main Point of Contact: This individual represents the Applicant and is responsible for completing the application(s), working directly with GADNR in submitting all necessary documentation, and managing all inbound and outbound communications between the Applicant and GADNR. While tasks may be delegated within the Applicant’s organization, the Main Point of Contact should remain consistent if possible, and should be well-informed about all aspects of the project’s scope and progress.

Project Cost Information: Complete the Project Budget Worksheet by adding individual budget items.

Project Description: Provide 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 addressing public support for Local Parks and Trails Pre-application. Additionally, the same guideline should be adhered to for economic impacts created by the proposal. This should be addressed in Question 12 for Local Parks and Trails Pre-applications.
- Make a strong and obvious distinction between elements seeking GOSP assistance and existing or future elements not applicable to GOSP support. There are times when describing existing/future site elements are vital in 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.

Project Type: Mark the appropriate project type denoting the appropriate funding stream for your application. A project must clearly fit into only **one** option.

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.

3.4 Pre-application Evaluation Criteria

Criteria Associated with All Projects

All Applicants are to complete this section.

Question 1 – Matching Funds

Max Points 5 points

Criteria Question What percentage of matching funds can you provide?

Question Details Applicants must identify the percentage of matching funds that they can provide by dividing the total match dollars available by the total project cost. NOTE: Projects submitted by applicants other than state agencies must provide at least 25% matching funds in order to be eligible.

All matching funds must be included and highlighted as such in the Project Budget Worksheet. Written documentation of monetary investments or in-kind donations must be provided in the form of letters of contribution.

Scoring Metric All Applicants except state agencies:

< 25.0% = ineligible
25.0% = 0 points
25.1% - 34.9% = 2 points
35.0% - 49.9% = 4 points
≥ 50.0% = 5 points

State Agencies:

≤25.0% = 0 points
25.1% - 34.9% = 2 points
35.0% - 49.9% = 4 points
≥50% = 5 points

Question 2 – Project Need

Max Points Up to 25 points

Criteria Question To what extent does this project address priority needs identified in a formalized planning document and demonstrate a meaningful contribution toward enhancing Georgia’s outdoor recreation and conservation goals?

Criteria Details Applicants must describe how elements within the proposal effectively satisfy a clear and compelling need, while contributing to advancement of outdoor recreation and conservation goals.

Required Documents Applicants should list the name of any current planning document in which the project need is identified. The cover page and the section(s) or page(s) that directly relate to the proposed project’s need should be combined in a single document, when possible. If submitting a longer document, applicants must clearly reference relevant page numbers and highlight the applicable sections.

Examples of current, formalized planning documents include but are not limited to comprehensive plans; recreation master plans; county or regional master plans; trail system plans; capital improvements plans; regional water plans; land use management plans, or other credible supporting documents.

Scoring Metric Applicant may receive up to 25 points based on how effectively the project addresses critical and/or priority needs; demonstrates a clear and compelling need; contributes meaningfully to advancing Georgia’s outdoor recreation and conservation goals. Scores will be determined through an evaluation of the project’s overall merit.

Question 3 – Outdoor Recreational Opportunity

Max Points 25 points

Criteria Question Will this project provide outdoor nature-based recreational opportunities?

Criteria Details Applicants must identify all nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities that will be provided through the acquisition or development of this property.

As defined by the GOSA statute, acceptable nature-based outdoor recreation activities include hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, boating/canoeing/kayaking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Other activities may be considered; however, the Applicant must demonstrate how such activities qualify as nature based.

Required Documents Project plan/map or other document clearly indicating the location of all proposed activities on the property. For example, if “biking” is listed, the bike trail should be shown on the map; if “camping” is listed, designated campsite locations should be identified.

Scoring Metric Applicants will receive 5 points for each activity identified on the map, for a maximum of 25 points.

Question 4.a. - Water Quality and Quantity: LOCATION (0 points*)

*Question 4.a serves as a Qualifier for Question 4.b. Projects that can demonstrate the applicability of one or more items, A through F, have the potential to earn points in Question 4.b.

Criteria Question Is this project located in one of the areas listed?

Criteria Details Projects Must be located in at least one of the locations identified in items A-F to qualify for points.

A. The project is located in a Hydrologic Unit Code HUC-12 watershed, identified by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) as a priority watershed for water quality purposes.

B. The project is located in a HUC-12 or equivalent size area identified as impacted by or sensitive to hydrologic alteration.

C. The project is located in a HUC-12 watershed identified by GAEPD as a healthy watershed.

D. The project is located in a HUC-12 watershed with waters identified by GAEPD as impaired with any of the following criteria violated: Algae, Biota Impacted (Fish Community), Biota Impacted (Macroinvertebrate Community), Bacteria (E coli, Enterococci, Bacteria, FC), Chlorophyll a, or Dissolved Oxygen.

E. The project is located in one of the Most Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas in Georgia.

F. The project is located in the Inner or Outer Management Zone identified in a Wellhead Protection Plan or a Source Water Protection Plan.

Question 4.b. - Water Quality and Quantity: BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Max Points 5 points each, for a maximum up to 25 Points

Criteria Question Will any of the below listed Best Management Practices be used for any improvements, restoration, or management activities associated with the project *beyond what is required by existing commitments or local and state law?*

Criteria Details Applicants must select each of the items A-E that apply and describe the implementation and conservation benefit of each.

A. Restoration of vegetated riparian buffers using native plant species in a condition appropriate for the region (minimum = 100 linear feet x 25 foot wide buffer).

B. Restoration of streambanks and natural hydrologic processes (minimum of 100 linear feet of streambank).

C. Protection of wetland/marshland and stream buffers beyond what is required by local and state law.

D. Use of green infrastructure (see Technical Appendix for more information).

E. Permanent protection of a significant portion (>25%) of any USGS HUC 12 or larger watershed.

Scoring Metric Applicants will be awarded 5 points for each selection identified above, in which adequate documentation is provided up to 25 points.

Question 5 – Cultural and Historical Value

Max Points 10 points

Criteria Question Does this project include the acquisition or stewardship of land with documented cultural or historical significance?

Criteria Details Applicants must demonstrate the cultural and/or historical significance of the property and describe how the proposed project will protect, enhance, or provide access to those resources. When applicable, applicants should clearly identify whether the property is:

- Formally recognized at the national, state, or local level (e.g., listed on the National Register of Historic Places, designated as a National Historic Landmark, or identified as a Georgia Historic Site, etc.); and/or
- Associated with documented cultural or historical resources, such as historic sites, structures, landscapes, archaeological resources, or culturally significant areas.

Applicants should also clarify whether the project is directly located on, adjacent to, or connected with the cultural or historical resource.

Supporting Documents If the property is formally recognized at the national or state level, documentation verifying the designation must be provided. For properties without formal designation, supporting documentation (e.g., listings, maps, studies, etc.) is encouraged to substantiate claims of significance but is not required.

Scoring Metric Applicants may receive up to 10 points based on the demonstrated cultural and/or historical significance of the property and how effectively the project preserves, enhances, or provides access to those resources. Higher scores will be awarded to properties with formal recognition at the national or state level, particularly when the project directly impacts the designated resources. Projects with indirect associations or without formal designation may receive partial points based on the strength of demonstrated significance and supporting documentation.

Question 6 – Ecological Value

Max Points 25 points

Criteria Question Does this project include the acquisition or stewardship of land with significant ecological, conservation, or natural resource value, and will it protect, enhance, or restore those resources?

Criteria Details Applicants must demonstrate the existing ecological value of the property **and** describe how the proposed project will protect, enhance, restore, or sustain those resources. Responses should:

- Identify existing ecological features, which may include, but are not limited to native plant and animal communities, Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), high-quality or sensitive habitats such as wetlands, stream buffers, floodplains, forests, or other critical ecosystems, etc.
- Explain the ecological significance of the site at the local, regional, or state level.
- Describe anticipated ecological outcomes or benefits resulting from the project. How the project will protect existing ecological resources from degradation or loss, enhance or restore habitats and ecological function, promote long-term sustainability and stewardship of natural resources, etc.

Required Documents Applicants must provide supporting documentation, such as, but not limited to data from the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) or the Georgia Biodiversity Portal, range maps, species occurrence records for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), photographs, maps, reports, or articles, technical documentation provided from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, including Watershed Technical Appendix, etc.

Scoring Metric Applicants may receive up to 25 points based on the demonstrated ecological value and significance of the property, supporting documentation, and the anticipated ecological benefits or enhancements resulting from the project.

Question 7 – Maintenance, Management, and Security Plan

<i>Max Points</i>	Up to 15 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Do you have a plan and budget to maintain, manage, and secure this property for multiple years beyond the project completion date?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	<p>Applicants must provide maintenance, management, and security plans demonstrating a multi-year commitment beyond project completion. Plans should clearly outline a credible timeline proof of dedicated funding for ongoing operations, including funding for staffing, operation and maintenance.</p> <p>Plans will be evaluated in three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintenance Plan: How will the site’s upkeep and ecological/functional viability be ensured over time? Include details such as hours of operation, routine maintenance activities, and site-specific upkeep requirements.- Management Plan: How will management and staffing needs be addressed to support, operate, and promote the site into the future? Include staffing levels, roles, and operational procedures.- Safety and Security Plan: How will property remain safe and secure for visitors? Include safety protocols, security measures, and emergency management considerations.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Maintenance Plan; Management Plan; Security Plan; Proof of dedicated funding for long-term operations; Resolution of support for long-term maintenance, etc.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	<p>Applicants may receive up to 5 points per category, for a total up to 15 points:</p> <p>Maintenance Plan: 0 – 5 pts Management Plan: 0 – 5 pts Security Plan: 0 – 5 pts</p>

Question 8 – Project Impact

<i>Max Points</i>	25 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Is this project regionally significant, and does it provide meaningful nature-based recreation and conservation benefits beyond the local community?

Criteria Details

Applicants must demonstrate how this project contributes to regional-scale impact by enhancing access to, or protection of Georgia’s natural resources while serving a broader population beyond the local community.

Responses should identify the populations served beyond the local community, including regional visitors, tourists, etc.; explain how the project serves users from multiple jurisdictions; and describe how it contributes to the protection or sustainability of natural resources at a regional scale.

Optional Supporting Documentation

Applicants may submit materials that further demonstrate regional significance; however, submission of these materials is not required. Examples may include regional or statewide plans, tourism or economic impact studies, maps showing connectivity to regional networks, etc. These materials are intended to strengthen, but not replace, the narrative response.

Scoring Metric

Applicants will be awarded points based on the project’s regional significance, as demonstrated through the quality, clarity, and strength of the narrative response.

Question 9 – Partnerships

Max Points

10 points

Criteria Question

Does the project include partnerships that provide a measurable monetary value through cooperation with external qualified local governments, local authorities registered with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, Community Improvement Districts or other partners?

Criteria Details

Applicants must describe the contribution of all partners and provide documentation demonstrating their active participation. For each partner, include:

- Scope and level of participation
- Type of contribution (e.g., cash, materials, volunteer/staff hours, professional services)
- Monetary value of the contribution

Notes:

Only partners that provide a monetary value (directly or in-kind) qualify for scoring.

All contributions detailed in commitment letters must be included in the Project Budget Worksheet.

Required Documents Letter(s) of commitment for each partnership.
Each letter(s) **must clearly quantify the dollar value** of the partner’s contribution.

Scoring Metric Applicants may receive up to 10 points based on the following categories. Multiple partners can contribute within each category. Each category must meet a minimum of **1% of the total requested GOSP funding** to qualify.

- 2 points - External Qualified Local Governments
- 2 points - Local Authorities registered with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- 2 points - 501 (c)(3) Non-profit Organizations
- 2 points - Community Improvement Districts
- 2 points - Other

**For non-profit partners, please provide proof of 501(c)(3) filing status.*

Question 10 - State SWAP Goals

Max Points 20 points

Criteria Question Does this project support goals and objectives in Georgia’s current State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)?

Criteria Details Applicants should describe how the project helps implement SWAP priority conservation actions described in the Conservation Action Tracker, or supports the conservation of any Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) or protects habitats for SGCN that are represented within Conservation Opportunity Areas, Priority Watersheds, or other lands. Points may also be awarded for conservation actions that are consistent with the goals outlined in SWAP story maps, the SWAP implementation strategy or any of the technical team reports. Please reference specific conservation actions,

species, habitats, Conservation Opportunity Areas, Priority Watersheds and page numbers from SWAP documents to support your answer.

Note: A link to Georgia’s State Wildlife Action Plan and all associated reports and applications, including the Georgia Biodiversity Portal, can be found on our website at www.qadnr.org/qosp. You can search for Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the vicinity of your project via the Georgia Biodiversity Portal or by viewing species listed within individual Conservation Opportunity Areas or Priority Watersheds. The Georgia Biodiversity Portal also includes range maps and ecological information for SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Scoring Metric

Applicants will be awarded up to 20 points based on the implementation of SWAP priority conservation actions outlined in their project.

Question 11 - State SCORP Foundational Goals

Max Points

5 points

Criteria Question

- Does this project overlap with the Foundational Goals in Georgia’s current State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan?
- A. Conserve natural resources - conserve and protect the state’s vital natural resources, while equally building up a new community committed to natural stewardship and outdoor recreation.
 - B. Enhance economic vitality - support and maintain Georgia’s outdoor resources to be attractive to new and current residents and businesses or draw tourists across our borders.
 - C. Promote health, fitness, and livability of communities - encourage physically active lifestyles near where people live and work, connect existing facilities for pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles via trails, increase opportunities proven to enhance quality of life.
 - D. Improve awareness, accessibility, and inclusion – improve and develop opportunities for all ages, backgrounds, means, and abilities to have access to and an awareness of outdoor recreation areas.

E. Partnership - effective collaboration among stakeholders to response to the overall needs of citizens.

Criteria Details

Applicants must identify any of the applicable SCORP goals and describe how the proposed project overlaps with each of the selected goals.

Note: A copy of SCORP can be found on at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Required Documents

Applicants must provide only the relevant excerpt(s) or specific page(s) from the SCORP document with which the project aligns. Submission of the full SCORP document is not required. Applicants should clearly highlight or identify the portions that directly relate to the proposed project.

Scoring Metric

Applicants will be awarded 1 point for each SCORP Goal identified above in which the project overlaps with and documentation is provided.

Additional Criteria for Local Parks and Trails of State and Regional Significance

Complete this section ONLY if you are applying for a Conserve Georgia grant or loan to fund Local Parks and Trails projects, otherwise skip this section.

Question 12 – Economic Development

Max Points

15 points

Criteria Question

Will this project create opportunities to enhance the regional and/or statewide economy?

Criteria Details

Applicants must demonstrate how the project will contribute to economic growth at a regional and/or statewide level. Responses

should clearly show impacts that extend beyond the immediate or host community. The narrative should explain how the project will generate economic activity and how these impacts benefit a broader region or the state.

Include quantitative data where possible, such as projected visitation increases, revenue generation, or other measurable economic indicators. Clearly identify the source of these estimates.

NOTE: The purpose of this question is to evaluate regionally significant economic growth. While local planning documents may be submitted, they must include clear and specific references to regional or statewide economic impacts.

Optional Supporting Documentation

Applicants may submit materials that further demonstrate economic impact; however, submission is not required. Examples include adopted planning documents, regional or county master plans, relevant pages from the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, documentation from Chambers of Commerce or economic development organizations, public hearing records or meeting minutes demonstrating economic development support, etc.

Scoring Metric

Applicants may receive up to 15 points based on the extent to which the proposed project demonstrates regionally or statewide economic impact, as supported by the narrative and optional documentation. Points will be awarded based only on the economic impacts directly attributable to the proposed project scope.

Question 13 – Recreational Access and Connectivity

Max Points

15 points

Criteria Question

Will this project provide new access or connections to other outdoor recreation facilities or areas?

Criteria Details

Applicants must clearly describe all new access points, or facility connections that will result from this project. The description

should focus on actual connections created by the project scope, not potential or future plans.

Required Documents

A conceptual map of the proposed project must be submitted that shows all new access points created; and highlights all existing outdoor recreation facilities or areas connected by the project. Labels, legends, or annotations must be used to make connections and access points easily identifiable.

Scoring Metric

Applicant may receive up to 15 points based on the number and quality of new access points created, the number of connections to existing outdoor recreation facilities or networks, and the clarity, accuracy and completeness of the conceptual map supporting these connections.

Question 14 – Stewardship

Max Points

5 points

Criteria Question

Will this project promote the stewardship and sustainable use of natural resources?

Criteria Details

Applicants should describe how this project will:

- Conserve or protect natural, scenic, or unique features of the property
- Encourage sustainable practices that maintain the property for future use
- Provide safe recreational opportunities that allow the community to enjoy the natural resources responsibly

Scoring Metric

Applicants will be awarded up to 5 points based on the level of stewardship including conservation, sustainable practices, and long-term protection for community enjoyment.

Question 15 – Water Access

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project add new water access points for public use, such as fishing, boating, or kayaking, where none currently exists?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicants must clearly describe the type of access provided (e.g., fishing pier/dock, boat ramp, kayak launch, etc.).
<i>Required Documents</i>	A conceptual map of the proposed project must be provided that clearly highlights the location of all new water access points and identifies the type of access provided (fishing, boating, kayaking, etc.)
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicants will receive 10 points if the project provides new water access point(s) and a clear conceptual map, showing the location of the access point(s), is provided. Additional Requirement Reminder: If the project involves land disturbance within a stream buffer (i.e., construction of a boat ramp or kayak launch), the applicant must follow all applicable rules and regulations for obtaining a certification of buffer variance. This documentation is not required with the pre-application, but applicants are reminded to comply with all requirements prior to construction.

Question 16 – Public Support

<i>Max Points</i>	5 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Is there documented public support for the project?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicants must demonstrate that the project has support from the public, stakeholders, or relevant user groups. This support should be specific to the proposed project.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Documentation may include, but is not limited to: letters of support from elected officials, citizens, or user groups; public

meeting minutes demonstrating discussion or approval of the project; proof of a public comment period posting; petitions or other materials that specifically indicate the project is needed or supported.

Scoring Metric

Applicants will be awarded up to 5 points if the submitted documentation clearly demonstrates public support for the proposed project.

Point Potential for Local Parks and Trails of State and Regional Significance Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Matching Funds	5
2	Project Need	25
3	Recreational Opportunity	25
4.a	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - Location	0
4.b	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - BMPs	25
5	Historical and Culture Value	10
6	Ecological Value	25
7	Maintenance, Management, and Security Plan	15
8	Project Impact	25
9	Partnerships	10
10	State SWAP Goals	20
11	State SCORP Goals	5
12	Economic Development	15
13	Recreational Access and Connectivity	15
14	Stewardship	5
15	Water Access	10
16	Public Support	5
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		240

Additional Criterion for State Stewardship

Complete this section ONLY if you are applying for a Conserve Georgia grant or loan to fund State Stewardship, otherwise skip this section.

Question 12 – Stewardship

Max Points 20 points

Criteria Question Will this project promote the stewardship of natural resources?

Criteria Details Applicants must demonstrate how this project will improve, rehabilitate and/or maintain an existing property, increase use of an existing property; or make significant improvements to the safety of an existing property.

Scoring Metric Applicant will be awarded points based on level of stewardship identified.

Point Potential for State Stewardship Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Matching Funds	5
2	Project Need	25
3	Recreational Opportunity	25
4.a	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - Location	0
4.b	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - BMPs	25
5	Historical and Culture Value	10
6	Ecological Value	25
7	Maintenance, Management, and Security Plan	15
8	Project Impact	25
9	Partnerships	10
10	State SWAP Goals	20
11	State SCORP Goals	5
12	Stewardship	20
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		210

Additional Criterion for State Land Acquisitions

Complete this section ONLY if you are applying for a Conserve Georgia grant or loan for State Land Acquisition, otherwise skip this section.

Question 12– U.S. Military Protection

Max Points 10 points

Criteria Question Will the acquisition of this property help protect lands, water and/or habitats in a way that supports or ensures the long-term sustainability of U.S. military missions?

Criteria Details Applicants must select project characteristics that apply:

- A. Acquisition of land surrounding any military base or military installation
- B. Acquisition will protect habitat on non-military land that is designated as threatened or endangered candidate
- C. Acquisition will protect underlying low-level U.S. Military air corridors or operating areas
- D. Acquisition will protect clear zones, accident potential zones or air installation compatible use buffer zones

Required Documents Supporting documentation that demonstrates how the property acquisition will protect lands/water/habitats to sustain U.S. military missions. This may include, but is not limited to, maps, plan, or a narrative describing specific examples of protection and relevance to military mission sustainability.

Scoring Metric Applicants will be awarded 10 points if the acquisition project supports the sustainability of U.S. Military missions and documentation is provided.

Point Potential for State Acquisition Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Matching Funds	5
2	Project Need	25
3	Recreational Opportunity	25
4.a	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - Location	0
4.b	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - BMPs	25
5	Historical and Culture Value	10
6	Ecological Value	25
7	Maintenance, Management, and Security Plan	15
8	Project Impact	25
9	Partnerships	10
10	State SWAP Goals	20
11	State SCORP Goals	5
12	U.S. Military Protection	10
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		200

Consistency with Georgia’s State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and State Wildlife Action Plan

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is developed by GADNR and typically contains an inventory of existing outdoor recreation facilities, an analysis of outdoor recreation needs, and projects that may be implemented to address unmet recreation needs. The Criteria Questions in the Pre-application focus on the three Primary Goals in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the current SCORP.

Georgia’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a statewide strategy to conserve populations of native wildlife species and the natural habitats they need before these animals, plants, and places become rarer and more costly to conserve or restore. Criteria Questions addressing SWAP in the Pre-application focus on critical priorities identified in the current SWAP.

The Georgia's SCORP and SWAP are extremely important documents which have great relevance to the GOSP review and ranking process. Since nature-based outdoor recreation, protection of critical areas, and preservation of cultural and historical resources are the cornerstones of the program, these publications play a critical role in understanding the priorities, needs, and direction of conservation efforts.

3.5 Second-level Application

Applicants who are selected as potential Grantees through the Pre-application process will be invited to submit a Second-level Application. Applicants who submit a complete and accurate Second-level Application will receive funding. The Second-level Application can be completed online at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Second-level Application:

The Second-level Application serves as a mechanism in gathering more detailed project elements, detailed surveys and reviews, and items that only apply to Applicants who qualify for funding.

Items submitted in the Pre-application may not be updated or amended without contacting the GOSP Grant Specialist, due to the competitive nature of the program. If an item must be revised, the GOSP Grant Specialist will determine if a Project Agreement Amendment or a resubmission of a new Pre-application would be required.

Second-level Applications shall contain the following additional items.

- **Responses to each of the Second-level evaluation criteria**
- **Second-Level Application Cover Letter** – This official letter is the instrument denoting support and authority to submit a Second-level Application. The cover letter must be on official letterhead and signed by an authorized elected representative of the applicant organization (e.g., Board Chair, Commissioner, Mayor, etc.).
- **Detailed Project Budget Worksheet** – This budget must include all items from the Project Budget Worksheet submitted during the Pre-application stage, but with a higher level of detail. It should list estimates by line item, units of measure/piece count, cost per unit, proper names of materials, etc. Only items and values depicted on this budget will be considered for reimbursement.

(This is a downloadable template to be completed and uploaded into the application portal. This can be found at www.gadnr.org/gosp)

- **Project Description** – Applicants must Provide a clear, concise, and site-specific description of the elements of the project to be acquired, maintained, enhanced, or otherwise supported through this project. This must match the project scope proposed in your pre-application, but in a condensed format.
- **Project Plans (Stewardship Projects Only)** - Stewardship projects must provide an electronic copy of site engineering plans. Plans must clearly depict the location of all proposed elements within the project site and include scaled measurements or distances. (This document is created by the applicant and must be uploaded into the application portal.) **Note: All plans must be submitted in .pdf format**
- **Project Implementation Schedule** – The implementation schedule must outline the timeline and sequence of each major project milestone and must be limited to the allowable 24-month project period. A recommended template is available on the GOSP website; however, grantees may use their own format. The schedule must be organized in a month-by-month format to allow DNR to verify progress during site inspections, if conducted.
- **Photos and Photo Key Map** – Applicants are required to submit various photos of the key components of the project receiving funding for the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) Environmental 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 GOSP funding. No more than 2 photos per page are to be uploaded to the online application.
- **Environmental Review Documents** – The environmental review ensures that any impact upon any GOSP assisted site is in accordance with GOSP good stewardship principles. The complete environmental requirements are referenced in section 3.6 of this manual.

3.6 Environmental Review Requirements

The environmental review process is a key component of this program. It requires that all Applicants consider the impact that their project may have on Georgia’s natural resources. All applicants will be required to submit the following documentation during the Second-level Application stage, if invited:

- Georgia Environmental Policy Act (GEPA) Environmental Checklist available at www.gadnr.org/gosp
- Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment by a qualified and licenced contractor. This function is not provided by GADNR and should be sought after by the Applicant.

Note: Phase 1 Environmental Assessments that were previously completed and are less than 5 years old as of the Pre-application deadline are acceptable to meet this requirement.

Environmental reviews to be completed by GADNR on behalf of the Applicant:

- Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) Review
- Historic Preservation Division (HPD) Review
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Review
- Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Floodplain Encroachment Review

3.7 Maps

Project Location Map – This map should depict the general location of the Project Site in relation to nearby towns, cities and major highways. Common mapping tools such as Google Maps may be used to create this map.

Property Boundary Map – This map must depict the official boundary, as committed to by the Applicant and will be considered the Project Site. All project elements must be located within this Boundary.

For acquisition projects, the Property Boundary must encompass the entire parcel(s) receiving GOSP funding. For stewardship projects, the boundary may be limited to only the portion of the parcel(s) impacted by the proposed project.

Preliminary Site Plan and/or Conceptual Plan – This may be an artist’s or engineer’s rendering that visually represents the proposed project. All project elements must be clearly shown, and any elements receiving GOSP funding **MUST** be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be depicted.

Photos and Photo Key Map – When Applicants submit various photos of the key components of the project receiving funding, 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.

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 executed project agreement.

Start Date: Once a fully executed Project Agreement is in place, grantees are authorized to begin work. The execution date of the Project Agreement shall constitute “Day 1” of the project period.

End Date: Projects must be completed within 24 months of the execution date of the Project Agreement. No additional project costs may be incurred after the project end date unless otherwise authorized by GADNR.

Note: Any project scope revision or extension request must be formally submitted to GADNR via email. All requests will be reviewed by GADNR staff and are subject to approval by the Board of Trustees or the Chairperson.

Project dates may be adjusted by GADNR based on fund availability.

4.2 Reporting Requirements

The following reports are required for projects:

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

4.2.A Quarterly Progress Reports

Once a Project Agreement is signed, the Grantee shall report to GADNR on the progress of the project, on a quarterly basis as follows:

- Period beginning January 1, ending March 31: Report is due April 30.
- Period beginning April 1, ending June 30: Report is due July 31.
- Period beginning July 1, ending September 30: Report is due October 31.
- Period beginning October 1, ending December 31: Report is due January 31.

Grantees are required to submit Quarterly Progress Reports to GADNR to ensure that GADNR is aware of the project's progress. Quarterly Progress Reports can be accessed and filled out on the GOSP 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.

4.2.B Reimbursement Requests

Payment of grant funds is primarily on a reimbursement basis. Accurate and comprehensive documentation of project costs is critical. Applicants will be required to submit to GADNR 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 GADNR. All reporting responsibilities must still be adhered to throughout the entirety of the project.

Eligible reimbursement costs vary by grant program and project type. Refer to sections 2.3A through 2.3C for further instruction.

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 at least quarterly. The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) processes payments after a Reimbursement Request has been reviewed and approved. Processing times can vary. Reimbursement Requests are based on actual project expenditures that align with the Grantee's Project Agreement, including the approved project application scope and budget.

Adequate supporting documentation for all expenses is 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 use documentation
- Documentation of procurement/bidding process
- Photos (optional)

GADNR or GEFA may request additional supporting documentation as needed to process a reimbursement request. Requests for additional documentation may extend the processing time for reimbursement.

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

Partial Billings

Partial billing refers to reimbursement requests submitted before the project is fully completed. The total of all partial billings may not exceed 75% of the total grant amount.

25% of each reimbursement request will be withheld as retainage until the cumulative retainage equals 25% of the total approved grant.

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 GADNR 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, according to the Project Agreement.

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

The Grantee will be held responsible for the match percentage committed in Pre-application stage. If the project is complete under budget, the Grantee will receive GOSP funds based on the original GOSA funds /match percentage.

Public Information

All information and documentation submitted to GADNR will be deemed public records and may be subject to public disclosure. Grantees are responsible for ensuring that confidential or sensitive information is removed or properly redacted prior to submission to GADNR.

Photos or other material submitted with the application or progress reports may be used by GADNR to promote the grant program.

Proof of Payment

Grant 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.

Acceptable forms of proof of payment may include, but are not limited to, a ledger or transaction report generated from the grantee's accounting system, bank statements, or cancelled checks (front and back). GADNR will not reimburse payments made in cash, as cash transactions do not provide verifiable documentation for audit purposes.

GADNR may request additional supporting documentation as necessary to verify eligibility and compliance.

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 internal departments, such as Corrections, Public Works, etc. may be counted towards match for time worked directly on the project. **Applicant's 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 2.5 for requirements regarding eligibility of force account expense for 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 the 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 GOSP funds, and cannot be reported on more than one grant, even if it is unassociated with the GOSP project. To be counted towards a project's match, donations must be documented on the **Donation / In-Kind Tracking Form**.

Documenting Donated or Volunteer Labor

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

Refer to policy 2.5 for volunteer or donated labor rates. Use the **Donation / In-Kind Tracking Form** available at www.gadnr.org/gosp to account for donated labor.

Alternate documentation may be accepted at GADNR'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 supplies, submit the **Donation / In-Kind Tracking Form** along with supporting information to justify the valuation determination.

Documenting Vendor Discounts

Normal vendor discounts and items “on sale” cannot be counted towards the match. However, discounts specifically provided by a vendor for the GOSP project may be counted if they are 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/or*
- 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.

4.2.C Final Report

Grantees must inform GADNR 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 GADNR final on-site inspection have been completed. This may require an additional GADNR final inspection prior to close out.
- Official As-built drawings in .pdf format
- For acquisitions only - An updated property deed with required Protective Language and recording stamp from the local jurisdiction’s County Clerk’s office.
- Final reimbursement request submitted to GADNR, marked as “Final”.
- Authorizing officer’s signature

GADNR 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.

4.3 Publicity

Grantees shall make reasonable efforts to acknowledge and publicize assistance received through the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program. Acknowledgement of GOSP participation must be displayed conspicuously at the project site, where appropriate and accessible to the public. Grantees may incorporate this acknowledgement along with GADNR logo into existing or new signage at the project location. An example of such is included below and also available at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Sample acknowledgement of GOSP Participation: *This project [project title] was completed on [insert date] in partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, through funding provided by the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program, Conserve Georgia grant.* www.gadnr.org/grants

In addition, grantees receiving GOSP funding shall acknowledge the program's participation on the organization's website or applicable project webpage, if available.

4.4 Procurement

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

4.5 Retention Requirements

Grantees are subject to a GADNR audit of their project file. Grantees must retain and keep accessible all books, documents, papers, and records that are directly related to the GOSP 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 GADNR 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.

4.6 GOSP Rules and Regulations

The **Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program Rule 391-5-13-.11**. can be accessed at:

<http://rules.sos.state.ga.us>

Section 5: Grant Closeout

Grant closeout signifies the completion of the project. GADNR must ensure all agreed-upon work, as described in the Project Agreement, is completed by the project expiration date. GADNR 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 GADNR to ensure all aspects of the Project Agreement have been met.

No later than 45 days after work is completed or the agreement end date, whichever comes first, Grantees must submit a Final Report and final Reimbursement Request and denote them as such. Within 45 days of receiving the Final Report, GADNR staff will complete a final audit of all project requirements and submissions. GADNR 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 GADNR staff

Once GADNR deems that all requirements of the Project Agreement have been satisfied, retainage will be disbursed to the Grantee per the Project Agreement. If total expenditures are less than anticipated, and payment of the full retainage amount would create a shortfall of the applicant's match, GADNR will adjust the payable retainage amount accordingly. In any instance where an overpayment of either reimbursement or retainage is realized, the Grantee is required to refund an amount back to GEFA 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 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP). Potential changes to the policies and procedures herein may be necessary to properly administer the program during any particular funding cycle. GADNR staff will make every effort to assist Applicants in satisfying changes in criteria and requirements as they occur.