



**Mississippi Department of  
Information Technology Services**



## **Mississippi Secretary of State BOSS: Business One Stop Shop**

**Category:  
Digital Government: Government to Business**

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**Nomination Submitted by:**

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## Executive Summary

The Mississippi Secretary of State (SOS) launched Mississippi BOSS: Business One Stop Shop (<https://www.ms.gov/sos/onestopshop>) in December 2015. The interactive BOSS application serves as a one-stop, providing prospective business owners with all the information needed to start their business in Mississippi.

The requirements gathering, development, and launch of Mississippi BOSS was a collaborative effort between the Mississippi Secretary of State (SOS), Mississippi Electronic Oversight Committee (EOC), the Mississippi Department of Revenue (DOR), Mississippi's eGovernment Partner, Mississippi Interactive (MSI), and Mississippi city and county government. Local businesses continually provide feedback on the service, ensuring content is enhanced on a consistent basis.

Through initial requirements gathering it was evident the Mississippi business community needed a comprehensive business start up guide. With numerous state and local requirements needed to form a business in Mississippi, BOSS aggregates the information saving users approximately 45 minutes during each government interaction required while gathering information. The intuitive wizard featured on Mississippi BOSS walks users through five simple questions and based on their answers returns a list of business start up tasks required by state, county and city government. Information is quickly and easily accessible from a single website without individual agency structures to separate citizen navigation.

Over the last five years the Mississippi SOS has been steadily adding to its online services offered on their award-winning website ([www.sos.ms.gov](http://www.sos.ms.gov)). Mississippi BOSS taps into those electronic services while cross collaborating with other state entities involved in the process and supplementing with local requirements based on a user's location. The Mississippi Secretary of State's website has seen a 14.80% increase in page views on the site since last quarter along with a 10.29% increase with new users since the launch of the Mississippi BOSS service. Increased site visits translated into gained efficiency in the SOS office, eliminating a large portion of phone calls to the SOS Business Services Division regarding new business formation.

The innovative technology solution supporting the service is provided by the Mississippi Interactive LLC (MSI), the state's partner for innovative eGovernment service delivery. MSI is responsible for the oversight of the official website and software development portal for the state of Mississippi, [ms.gov](http://ms.gov).

## Concept

The Mississippi BOSS application was developed to help streamline a cumbersome process of finding the information needed to start a business in Mississippi. Users previously would have to search several state and local websites and make countless calls in order to find out how and what was needed to start their business in our state. Furthermore, the Mississippi SOS was determined to find an electronic way to create in-office efficiencies; cutting calls, postage, clerical time etc.

Mississippi BOSS integrates online services and information from multiple state and local agencies to reduce the time needed to perform routine filings required to start and operate a business in the state. The mobile optimized BOSS provides users collective information to get them on their way to starting and owning their own business with less hassle. In Mississippi, there are dozens of forms, from numerous state entities, business owners may be required to file with the state on their journey to starting their business, and to remain in good standing. Along with these forms, there are various associated fees to be paid to state, county, and city governments in order for a business to be properly established in Mississippi. The Business One Stop Shop compiles this information and based on user responses provides all of the crucial business information needed to complete state forms and pay the costs associated with business ownership.

By utilizing the public-private partnership (PPP) between the State of Mississippi and Mississippi Interactive (MSI), the Mississippi Secretary of State was able to leverage Mississippi's eGovernment program to assist in funding development. The Mississippi BOSS application was selected by Mississippi's Electronic Oversight Committee as the first project to receive funding by the committee due to its business-forward approach, and its ability to connect important business information to prospective owners online. Funding was voted on and approved by the EOC members, representing six state agencies. The total funds released by the EOC accounted for 90% of the project cost. Mississippi BOSS was developed, tested, launched, hosted, and is maintained by Mississippi Interactive, LLC. Since the launch of the service SOS has realized a total cost avoidance of over \$24,000

The Mississippi Interactive team dedicated design resources for Cascading Style Sheets, (CSS), development team members built the application, and the Project Manager worked daily with the SOS to facilitate testing and updates to the application prior to launch. MSI and the Mississippi Secretary of State's office provided marketing by means of social media channels and promoted the service online via the nationally recognized websites ([www.ms.gov](http://www.ms.gov)) and ([www.sos.ms.gov](http://www.sos.ms.gov)). The Mississippi Secretary of State's office also marketed the application through their new award-winning Business portal, Y'all Business (<https://www.yallbusiness.sos.ms.gov>). The project in total resulted in 350+ resource hours saved by the SOS Office.

## Significance

The SOS Mississippi BOSS application provides a high level of comprehensive, easily navigated functionality that utilizes a five question wizard to guide users to information quickly and easily. The application allows the SOS office to serve its clients more efficiently by providing the following functionality:

- Business Questionnaire Wizard: By answering the five multiple choice questions provided, the online system communicates with a database to display a printable PDF results page relevant to the answers selected by the user. This quick survey and subsequent results page eliminates the guess work out of “what to do or where to go” when starting a new business in the State of Mississippi.
- Help Text and Quick Links: Help text is available throughout the application to users who may not know some of the terminology of business ownership. For example, “Am I an LLC or Corporation? And what is the difference in the two?” After each question is answered the user advances to the next page. Relative “Quick Links” are accessible on each page to provide the user with additional information as they proceed through the wizard.
- Customized Results: After completion of the wizard the user has the option to print a dynamic PDF document with their customized results and/or may choose to email the results to themselves.
- Mobile Optimization: With 1 out of every 3 visitors to Mississippi BOSS coming from a mobile device, the need for a fully mobile responsive service was a must. Great attention was made to make the application as accessible as possible using Bootstrap to easily scale the service using one code base. To seamlessly integrate the web-based application with the mobile user population, the online application wizard was responsively designed to fit any mobile or tablet device. The implementation of a mobile responsive design significantly increases usability by increasing the platforms and times when users can access profile information and quickly get started with starting a new business in Mississippi.

This application is accessible to any private organization, any one person or persons with Internet access who may want to know more about how to start a business in the State of Mississippi. Users from 32 counties accessed Mississippi BOSS in the last six months looking for information on how to start a business in Mississippi. With most of the targeted user base for Mississippi BOSS under the age of 35, signifying the need for Mississippi BOSS to help young business owners follow their own dream of owning a business in Mississippi.

The launch of the SOS website required significant collaboration between several executive divisions of the Mississippi SOS as well as the Business Services division within the office.

Including:

- Information Technology

- Public Relations
- Business Services

Additional collaboration between state entities and public-sector companies included:

- Mississippi Secretary of State (SOS)
- Mississippi Department of Revenue (DOR)
- Mississippi Interactive (MSI)
- Mississippi's eGovernment Oversight Committee (EOC)
- Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS)
- United States Internal Revenue Service
- County and City Governments

As the governing body of the eGovernment program, the EOC provided the initial approval to begin the development of the application. Throughout the development, implementation, testing and launch of the application the Mississippi Secretary of State and Mississippi Interactive worked closely in a collaborative process while providing monthly updates to the EOC. Thorough testing of the application occurred in groups with both SOS and MSI providing testing feedback and suggestions to enhance the application. Today MSI and SOS work together to update and enhance the application and will continue to jointly support the application in the future.

The Mississippi EOC's vision to provide citizens with efficient electronic government is directly seen in the funding of the Mississippi BOSS project, and it is this eGovernment strategy and others that continue to show the importance of the EOC as the group leads the eGovernment initiative by bringing state government directly to citizens.

## Impact

Users visiting the online application have responded very positively to the new online business resource. User feedback shows BOSS is saving users a significant amount of time by delivering in-depth custom results to the five question online wizard. On average, BOSS saves users 45 minutes for each action required for business start up; compared to calling individual county, city and state agencies looking for business information.

Along with the statewide positive reception, the Mississippi Secretary of State's website has seen a 14.80% increase in page views on the site since last quarter along with a 10.29% increase with new users since the launch of the Mississippi BOSS service. Recently, the BOSS website was awarded for its outstanding work with a Gold Hermes Award for Government Websites.

Internally BOSS has cut down significantly on "How do I?" phone calls to the agency. SOS estimates that calls to Business Services have been reduced by an average of 12 per day in the first six months since launch. As site traffic continues to grow so will the reduction in the amount of calls to the agency. The SOS staff's overall productivity has

been significantly enhanced, allowing them to spend more time on tasks that need their attention instead of fielding calls and emails about what is required in Mississippi to start a new business or returning, via post office, an incorrectly filed form or incorrect filing fee. The SOS has seen an 10.29% increase new users visiting their website since the Mississippi BOSS service was launched.