Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant Program
Frequently Asked Questions

Applicants

I am a new applicant and don't have a lot of grant writing experience. Is there anyone that can help me with the application process?

- The How to Apply Webpage and the Best Practices Document are great places to start. These will help walk you through the process and give tips on how to write a successful CPL application.
- Use the Grant Cycle Comparison Chart [UPDATE] to see what type of project you should aim for. Then see details for the New Applicant, Traditional, Metro, and Expedited Projects. For New Applicant, Traditional, and Metro grant requests under $25,000, the application is streamlined.
- For small organizations, it is often useful to have partners to help with both applying for a grant and managing a project.
- If you have questions, CPL Staff are always available to help. CPL staff can discuss project eligibility and competitiveness with you before you submit your application.

Who can apply for a CPL Grant?

- Applicants can include government agencies (cities, counties, conservation districts) that are a subdivision of the state of Minnesota, federal agencies, federally recognized tribal governments, and registered 501 (c) 3 nonprofits. Examples include:

Non-Profit Organizations	Government Entities
- Land Trusts - Lakes Associations - Charitable Organizations - Private Colleges and Universities - Fishing and Hunting Organizations "Friends of" Groups - Other Registered Non-Profits	- Cities - Counties - Tribal Governments - Federal Agencies - Conservation Districts - Public Universities - School Districts - Other Units of Government

- Private individuals and corporations are not eligible.

Who should fill the different roles in the application?

- **Project Manager:** This person applies for the grant, is responsible for the project, must be affiliated with the grantee organization, and will be the main contact.
- **Land Manager:** This person manages or owns the land where the project is located. The Land Manager and Project Manager cannot be the same person.
- **Fiscal Contact:** This person generally manages the grant funds, pays bills, makes payment requests, etc. The Project Manager and Fiscal Contact can be the same person.

Can work on private lands be funded?

- Work on private lands is only eligible if there is a permanent conservation easement on the project lands.

Can work be done in public waters on private land?

- Yes, work in public waters within the ordinary high water level on private lands is allowed.

Can I use quotes from contractors to estimate my project budget?

- Yes. This is a good way to show that budget details are realistic. We suggest getting multiple quotes from contractors that specialize in the work you will require. Please note that pre-award planning cannot be reimbursed. If needed, quotes from contractors outside your local area can be used to ensure reasonable prices for work are being given.

What insurance documents are required?

- Grantees are required to carry insurance that meets or exceeds the requirements of the landowner whose land they will be working on. Insurance requirements are available on the CPL website. Applicants should investigate the cost of insurance before submitting an application.

I don't have access to the Natural Heritage Information System. Can someone conduct a review for me?

- CPL staff will be able to conduct a Natural Heritage Information System Review for applicants who don't have access to the database free of charge.
- To request a Natural Heritage Information System Review please send the following information directly to LSCPLGrants.DNR@state.mn.us at least 7 days prior to your application's due date:
  - A .zip ArcGIS Shapefile or a .kml/.kmz Google Earth file of your project's boundaries.
    ### *OR*
  - A detailed map of your project's boundaries.
  - A street address or GPS coordinates of where your project is located.

Can someone review my application before I submit it?

- Yes, CPL staff can do a brief administrative review to ensure that your application is complete and eligible for funding.
- Please request an administrative review at least 7 days prior to the application deadline to ensure CPL staff have time to process your request.

For acquisition projects, is a prior agreement with the current landowner required?

- An agreement with the current landowner is not necessarily required, but a letter of support from the landowner could be an important supporting statement during the review process.

For acquisition projects, can I get an appraisal before applying for funds? Will the appraisal be reimbursed?

- An appraisal is helpful to show the actual value of the property, and to provide an accurate grant proposal budget. However, if an appraisal is done before applying for funds, the cost cannot be reimbursed. The cost of an appraisal can be used as match if the project is funded, as long as the appraisal is less than 12 months old.

I'm having trouble obtaining the 10% matching funds, is there any way to avoid this requirement?

- No, 10% matching funds from a non-state source are always required. This helps to encourage community participation and partnerships among organizations. In addition, there is high demand for CPL funds, and having a strong match can make a proposal more competitive.

What types of activities are not eligible for CPL funding or match?

- The most common ineligible costs include the following:
    - Indirect or overhead costs for basic operational functions (utilities, rent, office supplies).
    - Work on sites not approved in the work plan, unless approved in writing from CPL staff prior to the work being done.
    - Facility development or improvement projects such as parking lots, roads, picnic areas, fishing piers, waste disposal areas, camping areas, and hunter blinds.
    - Research
    - Education, interpretive signs, outreach, and fundraising.
    - Planning and survey work.
    - Parking expenses.
    - Capital equipment such as vehicles, trailers, chainsaws, sprayers, drones, cameras, etc.
    - Acquisition of land already owned by the state or subdivision of the state.
    - Activities on conservation easements that are the responsibility of the landowner under the terms of the easement.

Are engineering and design costs eligible for CPL funding or match?

- Engineering and design costs are not eligible for reimbursement, but may be used for pre-award match if incurred within 18 months prior to the application deadline. Please see the updated Request for Proposals for further information.

Are research costs eligible for CPL funding or match?

- Research costs are not eligible for reimbursement, but Biological Survey costs may be used for pre-award match if incurred within 18 months prior to the application deadline. Please see the updated Request for Proposals for further information.

Can we get more time to complete our project?

- No, most projects will have about 3 years for completion depending on when the contract is executed, and extensions are not allowed.
- If you anticipate a longer timescale for your project, we suggest breaking the project into clearly defined phases and using CPL funds for the initial phase.

I was informed that my application was not selected for funding. What are my next steps?

- All emails indicating that an application was not selected for funding will include the reasons behind that decision, and ways to improve any future application for the project.
- CPL encourages you to re-apply during a later funding cycle using the feedback included in the funding decision email.
- For more information about why your application was not selected for funding, and to discuss ways to improve a future application, please reach out to CPL staff.

What are some common reasons why CPL applications are not selected for funding?

- Application scores and funding decisions are decided by CPL's Technical Review Committees, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division Directors, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioners Office using the established CPL evaluation criteria. Applications that are not selected for funding are often deficient in one or more evaluation categories.
- Some specific recent examples of why applications were not selected for funding include the following:
    - Projects emphasized public safety, water quality, or infrastructure rather than habitat.
    - Projects limited habitat work to specific public use areas such as campsites and picnic areas.
    - Projects conducting engineering and restoration work where it was unnecessary and possibly detrimental.
    - Projects using plant plugs rather than seed mixes in prairies, significantly increasing costs.
    - Projects lacking detailed restoration/enhancement methodology.
    - Projects that did not include site or regionally appropriate plant species.
    - Project sites were either too small, too disconnected, or both which limited habitat benefits.
    - Applications lacking detailed descriptions and justifications behind their project work.

       o   Re-applications that did not change their project based on CPL and DNR feedback.

Grantees

I was informed that I received CPL grant funds. What are my next steps?

- All emails indicating that an application was selected for funding will include instructions for executing a CPL contract and starting a CPL project.
- CPL grantees will need to provide the following information before starting the contract execution process:
    - A completed Conflict of Interest Form which will be attached to the award email.
    - A completed Workforce and Equal Pay Declaration Page which will attached to award emails of projects above $100,000.00.
    - A completed Pre-Encumbrance Form.
    - A completed Pre-Award Risk Assessment Checklist.
    - Grantee organization's proof of insurance.
    - Emailed contact and bid/quote request with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa with CPL staff cc'd.
    - Emailed contact with one or more DNR programs to explore whether their grant can provide training and education to racially, ethnically, and economically diverse youth with CPL staff cc'd.
- All information must be submitted within 30 days of receiving the CPL award notification.

When can I start work on my project?

- No work can begin until your project's contract has received final DNR signatures, and you have been contacted by CPL staff stating that the contract has been executed.
- Costs occurring before the contract has been fully executed are not reimbursable.

When are annual reports due?

- Annual Accomplishment Reports are due at the end of the calendar year (December 31st). If annual work is complete for the calendar year, reports may be submitted early.
- Reports must be cumulative, so new information can simply be added to your previous report for the next calendar year.

How do I report acres completed?

- Acres completed should only be counted once during your grant period, and should be included in your Final Accomplishment Report.

Do I need to put up CPL signs at my project sites? How many signs will I need to put up?

- Yes, signage is required to be installed by law. CPL signs display an 18" tall by 9" wide Legacy Logo and are shipped for free to grantees. CPL staff will contact project managers of all open projects in February of each calendar year to determine how many signs are needed.
- CPL suggests installing one sign at each major access point to a project area, though the final number of signs needed is up to the discretion of the land manager. If you are unsure of how many signs are needed, please contact CPL staff.

Can I hire new staff to work on my project using CPL funds?

- No, the grantee organization cannot hire new staff (either permanent or temporary) using CPL funds. Existing paid staff can be reimbursed using CPL funds, but only up to X% of the total grant amount. This amount can be split between project management and grant administration at the grantee organization's discretion.

I would like to add more acres to my project, how can I do this?

- More acres can be added to a grant without needing a formal contract or work plan amendment. To add more acres to a project, please have the land manager of the site send their approval of the added acres to CPL staff through email.
- All added acres must be permanently protected or under a permanent conservation easement.

Will CPL staff need to see my project before my grant ends?

- CPL staff are required to conduct site monitoring visits for some but not all CPL projects. The necessity and frequency of these visits are based on the grant award value.
  - For grant awards at or below $50,000: No site monitoring is required.
  - Grant awards between $50,001-$250,000: One site monitoring visit is required, usually taking place at the end of the grant period.
  - Grant awards above $250,000: Annual site monitoring visits are required during the grant period.
- Acquisition projects regardless of award value do not require a site monitoring visit.
- CPL staff will begin to schedule site monitoring visits in spring. Please make sure to communicate where on-site you would like to meet CPL staff.
- If your project has an award value of $50,000 or below and you would like to have CPL staff conduct a site visit, please reach out to CPL staff directly.

I have finished all of my grant work, how do I close out my grant?

- To close out your grant, an email must be sent to CPL staff that includes the following.
  - A message stating that you are closing out your grant in the body of the email.
  - Completed site monitoring requirements if needed.
  - A Final Accomplishment Report attached to the email.

- o   A Final Payment Request Form attached to the email.
- CPL staff will send a confirmation email of your grant's closure once all documents have been processed and approved.

Reimbursements and Payment Requests

Please see the CPL Payment Manual for full details regarding reimbursements.

Who submits payment requests?

- The project manager or fiscal contact should submit all payment requests. Payment requests must not be submitted by the land manager or contractors. CPL staff can only reimburse the grantee, and all grantees are responsible for paying their contractors.

Where do I submit payments?

All payment requests must be submitted directly to CPL staff via email.

Can I request reimbursement at any time, or do I need to wait until the end of the grant period?

- Reimbursement requests can be submitted as frequently or as infrequently as the grantee needs. However, the CPL program recommends submitting at least 1 reimbursement request per calendar year.
- For the final payment request, the Final Accomplishment Report is required and 5% of the grant amount will be held back until all closeout materials and match is submitted.

How do I report personnel costs?

- Required documentation includes name of employee(s), dates of work, hours worked, a brief description of work, and the hourly rate. Supporting documentation for each employee should include either paystubs, payroll records, or a signed supervisor letter stating that the hours and rates are correct. The documentation is required for both grant and match funds.
- Personnel rates can only include base hourly wage and fringe (FICA/Medicare, retirement, health insurance).
- Reimbursable personnel costs cannot exceed 10% of the grant amount. Personnel costs beyond X% of the grant amount can be used for in-kind match.

How much can I claim for volunteers?

- Volunteers providing labor or services must use the prevailing wage of comparable labor.

Who do I contact if I have payment questions?

- For any questions regarding CPL payment procedures, please contact CPL Staff.