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 is a great place to start. This page will walk you through the process.
- Use the grant cycle comparison chart to see what type of project you should aim for. Then see details for Traditional, Metro, and Expedited projects. For Traditional and Metro grant requests under $25,000 the application is streamlined.
- If you have questions, CPL staff are available to help. Applicants are strongly advised to contact staff before beginning an application to determine whether your project will be eligible and competitive in the CPL program.
- For small organizations it is often useful to have partners to help with both applying for a grant and managing a project.

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.
- 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 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 Database system. Can someone review this for me?

- Typically CPL staff will be able to do a Heritage review for applicants who don't have access to the database. However, to ensure the review can be completed in time, it must be requested at least 10 days prior to the application deadline. Accurate maps and a description of project methods and goals will be required. There is no charge to the applicant if the applicant works directly with CPL staff for the review.

Can someone review my application before I submit it?

- Yes, CPL staff can do a brief administrative review to ensure your application is complete and eligible for funding. Please request this at least one week before the application deadline or staff may not have time to complete your request.

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

- An agreement is not needed, but a letter of support from the land owner 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:

- 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
- Research
- Education, interpretive signs, outreach, fundraising
- Planning and survey work
- Parking

- Capital equipment (e.g., vehicles, trailers, chainsaws, sprayers, etc.)
- Acquisition of land already owned by the state or a subdivision of the state
- Activities on conservation easements that are the responsibility of landowners under terms of the easement

Are engineering and design costs eligible?

- These 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 RFP for details.

Can we get more time to complete our project?

- Most projects will have 3-3 ½ years for completion, depending on when the contract is executed. Although restoration and enhancement projects often take more than 3-4 years to complete, CPL contracts cannot be extended. If you anticipate a longer time scale for your project, we suggest breaking the project into clearly defined phases and using CPL funds for one phase.

Grantees

When can I start work on my project?

- No work can begin until the contract has received final DNR signatures and you have been contacted by CPL staff stating that the contract has been executed. This typically happens within a month after the grant is awarded, but depends largely on how quickly the grantee submits required documentation. Costs occurring before the grant execution date are not reimbursable.

When are annual reports due?

- Annual [Accomplishment Reports](#) are due at the end of the calendar year, but if annual work is complete, reports may be submitted early.
- Reports should be cumulative, so new information can simply be added to the prior report in consecutive years. This will make final reporting easier as well.

How do I report acres completed?

- Generally acres completed should be counted only once during the grant period, even if multiple treatments or activities occur on the same land. Your work plan should reflect this so final acres are comparable to proposed acres.

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 by law. Signs display an 18" tall x 9" wide [Legacy Logo](#) and are shipped for free to grantees. CPL staff will contact the project manager to determine how many signs are needed. CPL staff typically coordinate one sign order for the entire program in the fall of each year.

- We generally suggest having a sign at the major access point(s) to a project area, though the number is up to the discretion of the land manager. This may be one sign for a small site with one access point, such as a trailhead or parking lot, or may include many signs for large project areas with many access points. If you're unsure how many signs are needed, please contact CPL staff.

Can I hire new staff to work on my project?

- No, the grantee organization cannot hire new staff (either permanent or temporary) using CPL funds. Existing paid staff can be reimbursed for up to 7.5% of the grant amount for project management. Of this amount, 2.5% may be used for grant administration. Personnel costs beyond 7.5% can be used for in-kind match.

Reimbursements and Payment Requests

Please see the Payment Manual for details regarding reimbursements.

Who submits payments?

- The project manager or financial contact should submit all payments, not the land manager or contractors. CPL staff can only reimburse the grantee, and grantees are responsible for paying the contractors.

Where do I submit payments?

- Please submit all payments directly to CPL staff or the general CPL email, not to DNR accounting. The preferred method of submitting payments is via email.

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

- Reimbursements can occur at any time and can include some or all of the grant costs. For the final payment request, the Final Accomplishment Report is required and 5% of the grant amount will be held back until all 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 include only hourly wage and fringe (FICA/Medicare, retirement, health insurance).
- Personnel rates cannot include overhead, bonuses or other indirect costs.
- Personnel costs may not exceed 7.5% of the grant amount. Of this amount, up to 2.5% may be used for grant administration costs. Personnel costs beyond 7.5% of the grant amount may be used for match.

How much can I claim for volunteers?

- As of August 1, 2015, the standard hourly volunteer rate is $20.
- Volunteers providing skilled labor or services may use current market wages if proof of wage can be provided.

Who do I contact if I have payment questions?

- CPL contact information can be found here.

General Questions

I use a Mac and have trouble using the Adobe pdf fillable forms, what should I do?

- Mac defaults to its own "Preview" program for pdfs, which sometimes doesn't work for filling in text boxes. Save the form to your computer and open it in the Adobe platform.

I forgot my password for the grant website. Can I have this reset?

- Try resetting this by clicking on "Forgot My Password" on the application page. Contact CPL staff if this does not work.