

Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2027 Request for Proposals

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant Program FY2027 Request for Proposal

Grant Program Summary

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages the CPL program to provide competitive matching grants from **$5,000 up to $500,000** to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations and government entities. Grants must restore, protect or enhance prairies, wetlands, forests, or habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A 10% match of non-state funds is required for all grants. The match may be cash or in-kind resources. The amount and source of match must be identified at the time of application. Total project costs may not exceed $1,000,000. CPL is a reimbursement-based grant program.

Applications for Round 1 of the Metro and Expedited Conservation Project (ECP) grant cycles will be accepted online beginning August 1, 2026. Applications must be submitted by September 16, 2026 at 4:00 PM for the Metro grant cycle, and by September 7, 2026 at 4:00 PM for the ECP grant cycle. Late applications will not be accepted. $13.1 Million is available for CPL grants for FY2027. View How to Apply for more information and to access the online application system.

Goals and Priorities

The CPL program is ***habitat-focused***. Grant activities include the enhancement, restoration, or protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. All applications should identify the direct habitat benefits of the project including but not limited to specific species, ecosystems, habitat types, and natural heritage features. All projects must adhere to MS 97A.056.

Restoration and enhancement projects will only be funded on lands that are:

- Permanently protected by a conservation easement as defined in MN Statutes 84C.01;
- in public ownership (ownership by a unit of government including tribal, federal, state, county, city, school district, special district, etc.); or
- in public waters as defined in MN Statutes, Section 103G.005, subdivision 15.

Acquisition projects may include acquiring land through fee title or permanent conservation easement.

Lands acquired in fee title must be open to the public for hunting and fishing during all open seasons unless otherwise provided by law.

CPL Funding and Grant Cycles

Funding for the CPL grant program comes from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) created by the people of Minnesota. OHF receives 33 percent of the sales tax revenues resulting from the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Constitutional Amendment passed by the voters in the November 2008 election.

For Fiscal Year 2027, a total of $13.7 Million was recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The Minnesota State Legislature approved $13.7 Million in CPL funds, and allocated all funds to be used for projects taking place in the 7-county metro area (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington) and within cities with populations greater than 50,000 people (Duluth, Rochester, and St. Cloud.) as Minnesota Laws 2026, Regular Session, Chapter 126, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 5 (aa), Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program: Metro Habitat

Of this amount, $11,100,000 is available for grants for the Metro grant cycle, and $2,000,000 is available for the Expedited Conservation Projects (ECP) grant cycle. Since all funds have been legislatively allocated to Metro projects, the CPL program will not hold either a Traditional (Statewide) grant round, nor will it hold a New Applicant Round in Fiscal Year 2027.

Metro: $11,100,000

- Up to 2 funding cycles.
- Projects must be located within the 7- county metro area or within city limits of cities with a population of 50,000 or greater (Duluth, Rochester, St. Cloud).
- All eligible projects (restorations, enhancements, or acquisitions) on all eligible lands.
- Grant requests between $5,000 and $500,000.
- Total project cost may not exceed $1,000,000.

Expedited Conservation Projects: $2,000,000

- Grants are limited to a maximum award of $75,000 (minimum $5,000).
- Total project cost may not exceed $1,000,000.
- Projects must be on the ECP Activity List.
- Restoration and enhancement projects only (no acquisitions).
- Projects must be on public lands or waters, or on land protected under a permanent conservation easement.
- Projects must be located within the 7- county metro area or within city limits of cities with a population of 50,000 or greater (Duluth, Rochester, St. Cloud).
- Open continuously through May 10, 2027, or until funds run out, whichever comes first.
    - Completed applications will be pulled for review every two months on the following days at 4:00 pm:
        - Round 1: September 7, 2026

- Round 2: November 9, 2026
- Round 3: January 11, 2027
- Round 4: March 8, 2027
- Round 5: May 10, 2027

For the Metro cycle, a simplified application is available for applicants requesting less than $25,000. Applicants should be sure to address all items in the Evaluation Criteria within the simplified application.

If more than $1 million remains after the first Metro grant round, a second Metro grant round will be offered, beginning January 1, 2027, and closing February 16, 2027. If less than $1 million remains, these funds will be available for the ECP grant cycle.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reserves the rights to:

- Award less than the total amount available if suitable projects are not submitted.
- Make additional awards under this announcement, consistent with DNR and Outdoor Heritage Council recommendations and guidance, if additional funding becomes available, a project comes in under or over budget, or if a grantee cannot carry out their project as planned.
- Award amounts less than requested if not enough funding is available for the entire request.
- Award amounts less than that requested in an application should it be determined that aspects of a project are not desirable, cost-effective, or eligible for funding.

Eligible Applicants

Registered 501 c(3) nonprofit organizations and government entities are eligible for CPL funding. Private individuals and for-profit organizations may not apply. Partnerships are encouraged. Examples of eligible applicants include but are not limited to the following:

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

State Grant Policy 08-13, Evaluating Grantee Performance, requires state agencies to consider a grant applicant's performance on prior grants from that agency before making a new grant award of over $5,000. Applicants who performed poorly on prior grants may not be funded, or may be only partially funded until performance has improved.

Application and Proposal Requirements

Only complete applications will be accepted. Applications must include a signed Land Manager Review and Approval Form. Applicants requesting over $25,000 must include financial information, as described on page 8. A Public Waters Form is required for projects located in public waters.

Match Requirements

This program requires a 10% match of non-state funds. The match may be cash or in-kind resources. Funds used for match for CPL grants cannot be used as match for any other state grant programs. Match funds must be documented and reportable, and are subject to audit.

The match amount is determined by multiplying the grant amount requested by 10%.

Cash Match

Cash Match is actual cash contributed to a project, either from the grantee organization or a third party. The cash match must be used for a documentable cost of the project, as approved in the Work Plan.

In-Kind Match

In-kind Match is non-cash donations of a good or service, such as personnel time (paid staff), volunteer time, use of equipment, and donated supplies or services.

Partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to combine contributions from non-state partners to meet the match requirement. One eligible applicant must lead the partnership effort and assume program and financial responsibility for all work in the application. Successful applicants should be prepared to document matching contributions, including the number of volunteers and volunteer hours on individual projects.

Match funds from partners must be supported with letters of commitment. A sample letter is available on the How to Apply webpage. Letters of commitment should include all of the following:

- Be written on the contributing organization's letterhead.
- Identify the applicant and name of the project.
- Identify the amount and source of funding they are committing.
- Describe any time constraints or other contingencies with the funding commitment.
- Be signed by member(s) of the contributing organization with authority to commit the organization to the match.

Additional Funding

Some large projects involve multiple funding sources that may not be eligible as match for this grant. Keep these amounts separate. There is an "Additional Funding" box in the application to list the additional funding sources and amounts. Total project cost (grant + match + additional funds) cannot exceed $1,000,000. Projects exceeding $500,000 should apply directly to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

Land Manager

The Land Manager is the person who manages the land where the project is located. For acquisitions, the Land Manager is the person who will manage the land after purchase. For easements, the Land Manager is whoever holds the easement. The Land Manager cannot be the same person as the Project Manager. The Land Manager will be responsible for completing the Land Manager Review and Approval Form, which is required with each application.

Project Manager

The Project Manager is the person applying for the grant and responsible for the project. ***The Project Manager cannot also be the Land Manager***. The Project Manager will be the main contact and must be actively involved and available to provide information during the application period and through the life of the grant.

The Project Manager must be affiliated with the grant recipient's organization and be knowledgeable about biological, partnership, and administrative aspects of the proposal. The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that all work is done according to grant and program requirements.

The Project Manager coordinates work with the Land Manager, and is responsible for ordering and purchasing supplies, writing and administering contracts, organizing and documenting volunteers, meeting permit requirements, etc. Some of these duties may be shared with the Fiscal Contact.

Fiscal Contact

The Fiscal Contact works cooperatively with the Project Manager but focuses on the fiscal side of the grant. The Fiscal Contact may also be the Project Manager. Specific duties are determined by the grantee's organization, but generally include grant and match fund management, bill paying, submitting payment requests, etc. The Fiscal Contact will frequently be included on emails and other communications between CPL Staff and grantees.

Natural Heritage Information System Review

The Natural Heritage Information System Review section must be completed on all Land Manager Review and Approval Forms for an application to be considered complete. If the Land Manager or easement holder cannot access the Natural Heritage Information System, ***they must contact CPL Grant Staff for assistance at least 7***

days prior to the application deadline. CPL staff will complete the review free of charge. To request a Natural Heritage Information System Review please send the following information directly to LSCPLGrants.DNR@state.mn.us:

- 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.

The results of this review must be incorporated into the Land Manager Review and Approval Form. If there are any findings, these must also be addressed in the appropriate section of the application.

State Historic Preservation Review

If CPL and DNR staff determine that a SHPO review is necessary, grantees are responsible for sending project information to SHPO. If SHPO determines that an archaeological survey should be completed on the project site before work begins, the grantee will be responsible for the survey and all survey costs, which can be completed with grant funds. If you believe that your project may require an archaeological survey in addition to the SHPO review, please add this into your budget. Most projects will not require a survey. Please contact CPL grant staff if you have questions about this requirement.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses are expenses (contracts, supplies and materials, salaries, etc.) directly incurred through project activities that are direct to and necessary for the project described in the application. These expenses must be specified in the application and documented during the grant period as indicated in the Payment Manual. Generally, if an expense is eligible as a grant cost, it is also eligible as a match cost. Some costs have limits to the amount that will be paid from grant funds; any costs above that amount may be eligible as match.

All grant and match expenses must occur within the project period except for pre-award match costs, described below. The grant period begins when the final signature on the grant contract is obtained and continues until all work is completed but no later than June 30, 2030 for FY27 funds.

Pre-Award Match Costs

Pre-award costs are costs incurred before the grant agreement is executed. All pre-award costs are incurred at the applicant's risk. Pre-award costs are only eligible for match, and must be identified in the application's budget:

- **Insurance**: Insurance costs for CPL projects are eligible only if incurred after the grantee has been formally notified that they have been awarded a grant, but before the grant is in place.

- **Appraisals**: Appraisal fees that were incurred less than 12 months prior to the application deadline are eligible match costs. The appraisal must be for the property specified in the grant application, and must meet all requirements in the Land Acquisition Procedures documents.
- **Engineering and Design**: Site specific engineering and design costs that were incurred within 36 months prior to the application deadline are eligible for match. Engineering and design documents must be submitted as uploads with the application in order to be used towards match.

Personnel and Grant Administration

Up to 15% of the grant amount may be used for personnel costs for project management and on-the-ground work. Only paid employees of the grantee organization may claim personnel costs. All others are considered volunteers, and their time can be used only as in-kind match.

Personnel rates include hourly wage and fringe only (FICA/Medicare, retirement, and health insurance). Bonuses, overhead, and other indirect costs cannot be included in the hourly rate. Proof of wage is required. All personnel costs must be budgeted in the approved Work Plan. All personnel time must be documented with the name of employee, date of work, hours worked, brief description of work, and hourly rate. Personnel costs beyond 15% of the grant may be used for match.

Travel

Transportation and travel expenses, such as lodging, meals, and mileage of personnel directly working on the grant, are eligible expenses (grant or match) in the same manner and in no greater amount than provided for in the current Nonrepresented Employees Plan. Travel expenses shall not exceed 3 percent of the total grant funds requested, unless approved by CPL grant staff. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred outside of Minnesota are not eligible expenses unless CPL staff has given prior written approval.

Permitting and Environmental Compliance Expenses

Costs associated with permitting and compliance requirements should be listed within the Additional Budget Items line of the budget and explained in the details section. Grant or match funds can be used to pay for these costs.

Construction Projects

Any projects requesting money for construction activities (water control structures, etc.) must have preliminary engineering design and plans completed for the project prior to application submission. These plans are necessary to provide an accurate cost estimate and fully developed scope of work. All plans must be submitted with the application. All design, engineering, survey costs, etc. may be used as match if completed within 36 months prior to the application deadline. For more information, see “Pre-Award Match Costs” on page 10.

Acquisition Costs

Acquisition costs such as appraisals, boundary surveys, legal fees, and initial development costs are eligible for reimbursement if planned for and approved in the Work Plan. Any obligation to purchase property made before the grant contract is executed is made at the grantee's risk. Acquisition costs for reimbursement and match may not exceed 110% of the appraised value. For more information on acquisition requirements, please see page 23.

Donation of Value for Acquisitions

A donation of value means a landowner receives less than the appraised value of the land. The difference between the appraised value and the amount the landowner receives is considered a cash match donation towards the grant. The donation may be only part of the difference or the entire amount. Any difference between the amount paid to the seller and the appraised value must be reported to CPL staff.

Biological Surveys

Research activities are ineligible for grant funding, but biological surveys are allowable as match. CPL staff may request survey results from applicants during the lifetime of the grant to assist with grant monitoring and closeout procedures.

Ineligible Expenses

Indirect costs (overhead costs for basic operational functions such as lights, office rent, water, phone) are not eligible grant or match expenditures. Below are some common requests for funding that the CPL program will NOT fund with grant dollars or allow as match (unless specified). These requests will be removed from any application prior to review and may result in the rejection of the entire application.

- Work on project sites not identified in the project's Work Plan or approved by CPL staff.
- Acquisition of land that is currently owned by the state or a political subdivision of the state.
- Activities that are the responsibilities of landowners under the terms of the easement.

Facility Development

Facility development or improvement projects including but not limited to parking lots, roads, picnic areas, fishing piers, waste disposal areas, camping areas, and hunter blinds are not considered habitat projects and are ineligible for grant funding.

Limited approval of these developments such as temporary equipment access roads will be permitted only as part of the initial development of newly acquired lands.

Engineering and Design Costs

Grant funds *may not* be used to pay for engineering and design costs for any activity. Engineering and design work must be substantially complete before requesting grant funds for a project. CPL staff may request engineering and design plans from applicants during the review process to validate cost estimates and ensure the project will be completed within the allowed timeline.

These costs may be used for Pre-Award Match if incurred within 36 months prior to the application submission date. See page 11.

Capital Equipment

Capital equipment is not an eligible CPL expense, but equipment valued under $10,000 can be counted toward match. A maximum total amount of $10,000 in capital equipment expenses can be counted toward match.

Interpretive Signs and Event Planning

Interpretive signs and expenses spent planning events are eligible as match. Interpretive signs must follow L-SOHC logo guidelines in order to qualify as a match expense. Interpretive signs must follow all guidelines as stated in the CPL Payment Manual. Event planning expenses must also be directly related to the CPL project.

Application Information

All applications must be submitted online using the CPL Online Application System. Organizations may submit multiple applications; however, it is helpful to indicate in the application summary which project is the highest priority.

Dates and Deadlines

Applications for Round 1 of the Metro grant cycle will be accepted from August 1 until September 15, 2026 at 4:00 PM, CST. Grants for Round 1 will be selected by December 30, 2026. If funding remains, Round 2 will open on January 1, 2027 and close on February 16, 2027 at 4:00 PM, CST. Grants for Round 2 will be selected by May 31, 2027.

See the Application and Funding Schedule for a list of ECP dates and deadlines.

Application Status

The DNR will notify all applicants of their status via email by December 30, 2026 for the first round of grants and by May 31, 2027 for the second round of grants, if applicable. ***This notification is not an authorization to begin work.***

ECP applicants will be notified within 4 to 6 weeks of the deadline for the round in which they applied.

Online Application System

All application information, including the required and optional forms, instructions, and the application system link can be found on the Metro, ECP, or How to Apply webpages. All grant applications must be submitted using the online application system. Applicants must create an account and password the first time they access the system. The system allows applicants to save their application and return to it as many times as needed before submitting. Once the application is submitted, only CPL staff will be able to make changes.

Completing the Application

- Applications must have a project manager, land manager, and a fiscal contact. The project manager and fiscal contact may be the same person, but neither can also be the Land Manager.
- A valid email address for the project manager and fiscal contact is required. All initial correspondence with CPL staff will be by email.
- Financial documentation must be submitted for nongovernmental organizations requesting over $25,000.
- Each project site must be mapped using the online mapping system.
- Each applicant must submit a completed Land Manager Review and Approval Form, including the Natural Heritage Database Review section, signed by the Land Manager or Easement Holder and uploaded electronically to the application.
- For work on private lands, the permanent conservation easement documentation must be uploaded.
- Projects occurring within public waters must submit a Public Waters Project Form in addition to the Land Manager Review and Approval Form. This form should be completed and signed by the DNR Area Hydrologist.
- Call or Email CPL Grant Staff with any questions and for any clarifications. Applicants planning to work in public waters should review Requirements for Projects Involving Public Waters Work Permits and Do I need a Permit? prior to applying for funding.

Applicants are responsible for the content of their application. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all forms are completed, signed and uploaded. Applications with missing or incomplete forms will not be accepted.

Applicants must click on the "submit application" button to submit their application. Once submitted, no changes can be made by the applicant. CPL staff may be able to help with minor changes.

For a full description of the CPL application, please see Appendix 1: CPL Application.

Financial Document Requirements for Nongovernmental Organizations

Nongovernmental organizations requesting over $25,000 are required to submit financial documentation to meet the State Grant Policy 08-06. The application system will prompt the user for this information, which will be reviewed by CPL staff. Required documentation is based on annual income:

a) Less than $50,000 - most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
b) $50,000-$749,999 - most recent IRS Form 990.
c) $750,000 and up- most recent certified financial audit.

Application Review Process

Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

The Evaluation Criteria used to evaluate grant applications has been developed by the MN Legislature, LSOHC, Office of Grants Management, and CPL Staff. Applicants should review the Evaluation Criteria Table found at the end of this document to make sure all the information needed to fully evaluate their application is included in their applications. Metro applications will be scored on all six criteria found in the table, with equal weight given to each of the six categories. ECP applications will be reviewed with the same criteria, but will not be given a score.

Initial Review

CPL staff will review all applications for completeness and eligibility. If submitted prior to the deadline, CPL staff may have a chance to contact applicants for missing information.

Technical Review for Metro Grant Cycles

Technical review of applications will be performed by a habitat-specific Technical Review Committee (TRC) and by DNR Regional Directors. TRC committees include habitat experts from both nonprofit organizations and government agencies including DNR, BWSR, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service, local governments, and universities. The TRC will score each application based on the Evaluation Criteria. Based on these scores, the TRC will provide a funding recommendation ranking for DNR Division Directors Review.

Division Director Review for Metro Grant Cycles

The Division Directors of DNR Fish and Wildlife, Ecological and Water Resources, and Forestry will review all applications and make a final recommendation to the DNR Commissioner based on the following:

- TRC scores, comments, and recommendations.
- DNR Regional Director comments.
- Public agency's ability and/or readiness to support proposed project activities.
- Applicants' ability to successfully complete work.
- Geographical distribution of funding.

Final Approval for Metro Grant Cycles

The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources must give final approval as to which projects to fund, based on all information provided by the Technical Review Committees, Regional Managers and Division Directors. The DNR reserves the right to reject any and all applications which do not meet the requirements of this RFP or are outside the scope of the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program.

ECP Grant Cycle Review

ECP applications will be reviewed by DNR habitat experts using the Evaluation Criteria as the foundation for a pass/fail decision. The Commissioner has granted approval authority for the ECP grants to the DNR's Fish and Wildlife Division Director. The DNR reserves the right to reject any and all applications which do not meet the requirements of this RFP or are outside the scope of the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program.

Applications Not Selected for Funding

Applicants not selected for funding will be notified of their status at the time the awards are announced. CPL staff will include information on why their applications were not selected for funding, and ways to improve their applications for future grant rounds. Applicants who are not awarded funding may ask for their applications to be reactivated, which will make them editable again should funding remain for a second grant round. Applications will then need to be resubmitted after editing to be considered for the next grant round.

Unawarded Funds

If more than $1 million remains after the first Metro grant round, a second Metro grant round will be offered. If less than $1 million remains after the first grant round, these funds will be available for the ECP grant cycle.

Any unawarded funds after Round 2 will be available for the ECP grant cycle. Any unawarded funding from ECP after the 5th funding round in May 2027, will be rolled into available funds for FY28 CPL Metro grants.

Award Information

Round 1 of Metro Grants is expected to be announced by December 30, 2026.

Round 2 of Metro Grants is expected to be announced by May 31, 2027.

Grant Award Information

Successful applicants will be notified via email. All grants will be awarded using a grant contract. The grant contract is the legal document between the award recipient (grantee) and the State of MN. Upon request by CPL staff, grantees will need to submit a pre-encumbrance form, pre-award financial review, an insurance certificate, conflict of interest form, CCM contact email, and Work Plan approval. Once these items are submitted, CPL staff will set up the grant contract. CPL staff will provide further instructions to grantees after the initial award notification.

Preaward Risk Assessment and Financial Review

In accordance with Minnesota Statute §16B.981 and OGM Policy 08-06: Preaward Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees, it is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants of $50,000 or more.

Work Plan

The awarded grant application will become the Work Plan, which is incorporated into the grant contract. The grantee will have a chance to review their application for any minor changes before it becomes their official Work Plan. Once the grant contract is executed, project changes may need a formal amendment. Any changes made to the Work Plan without CPL staff approval may result in not being reimbursed for expenses related to those changes.

Executing the Grant Contract

Grantees will need to register with the State Vendor System before they can enter into a grant contract with the State. A federal tax identification number is required to register. Once the grantee has a state Vendor ID number, CPL staff may begin to set up their contract. Grant contracts require a minimum of three signatures signed in this order:

1. State Encumbrance Verification by a DNR fiscal staff member.
2. Grantee Signature by the member(s) of the grantees' organization who have the authority to sign legal documents on behalf of the organization.
3. State Agency signature by a DNR Division Director or other staff with delegated authority to approve the grant and expenditure of state funds.

The grant contract is "executed" when all the above signatures have been obtained. Work may not begin until the grant contract is executed, and the grantee is notified by CPL staff. Once the grant contract is executed, no changes may be made without approval from CPL staff. CPL staff may grant permission for minor changes, but most changes will require a formal grant contract amendment.

Grant Period

The grant period starts when the grant contract is "executed," meaning all required signatures have been obtained, and typically lasts 3 to 3 ½ years. The end date is determined by the appropriation language. Projects funded with FY27 funds must be completed by June 30, 2030. Any work occurring outside of the grant period is not eligible for reimbursement and cannot be used as match, except for the exceptions listed under "pre-award match costs." Grant period extensions are not allowed.

Payments

Grantees will be paid on a reimbursement basis. All requests for payment must be emailed directly to CPL Staff. Organizations with limited cash flow may request payment for services rendered upon approval from CPL staff. Advance payments may be provided for acquisitions if requested 30 days prior to the scheduled closing. Shorter time periods may be accommodated, but cannot be guaranteed. Five percent of every grant (including advance acquisition payments) will be held back until the project is completed and a Final Report has been submitted. State Grant Policy 08-08, Grant Payments has more information on grant payment methods, schedules, and other payment information. Please also see the CPL Payment Manual.

Timeline for Reimbursement

The state has up to 30 days to process payment requests once all required documentation is received. The fastest way to receive payments is by signing up for Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT) using a state vendor number. This system allows grantees to review their payment information online.

Grant Outcome Expectations and Reporting Requirements

Ecological Restoration Management Plan

An Ecological Restoration and Management Plan must be prepared for all awarded grant projects and is due with the first payment request.

Accomplishment Reports

Accomplishment Reports must be submitted by December 31 of each year that the grant is active. The Accomplishment Report form is designed to be cumulative and updated each year until it becomes the Final Report. A Final Accomplishment Report must be submitted with the final payment request by July 25, 2030. Payments requested by grantees with outstanding reports will not be processed. Grantees are expected to meet or exceed the planned accomplishments as outlined in their Work Plan.

Real Property Interest Report

An annual Real Property Interest Report will be required of grantees that acquire land in fee title or easement so long as they hold the interest in real property. This requirement will be transferred along with conveyance of land.

Grant Monitoring

State Grant Policy 08-10, Grant Monitoring, requires state agencies to conduct at least one monitoring visit and financial reconciliation per grant period on all state grants over $50,000 and to conduct at least annual monitoring visits on grants over $250,000. Monitoring may be done in person or by telephone, at the discretion of CPL staff.

Field reviews are intended to ensure that work was performed as described in the grant contract. Financial audits ensure grant funds and match funds are properly spent and accounted for. Grants under $50,000 are occasionally subject to monitoring, based upon grantee performance, history of grants management, and the activity funded.

Grant Accounting and Record Retention

The grantee is responsible for maintaining fiscal controls and fund accounting procedures that are based on generally accepted accounting standards and principles. All grant records must be saved by the grantee for a minimum of six years following the final report. Records are subject to audit.

Additional Audits

The DNR and/or Legislative Auditors may also conduct financial reconciliation audits. As per M.S. 97A.056, Subd. 10, a technical panel was created to evaluate restoration projects funded by the Outdoor Heritage Fund. CPL projects may be subject to this evaluation.

General Program Requirements

This program is funded by state dollars and requires a significant amount of documentation and transparency. All expenditures and work completed with these funds must adhere to federal, state, and local laws, regulations, policies, and codes, as applicable.

Minnesota Statutes

Projects must meet the requirements set out in Minnesota Laws 2026, Regular Session, Chapter 126, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 5 (aa), Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program: Metro Habitat and MS 97A.056.

Projects on public lands, and any project receiving state funds, may require more approvals and/or permits than other projects. It is the applicants' responsibility to obtain all required approvals and permits. Applicants must coordinate with public Land Managers, Easement Holders, and/or private landowner(s) before any work begins.

Commissioner's Approval

The Commissioner of Natural Resources must approve all projects. All projects must conform to the MN Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan. Wildlife projects must conform to the State Wildlife Action Plan.

Grantee's Duties

Grantees must be willing and able to perform all work required to complete the projects they are requesting funds for. This includes managing any bid, contract or purchasing process necessary to complete work under the grant. The grantee is also responsible for project oversight and management. DNR or other public Land Managers or Easement Holders may provide technical guidance to the grantee, but are not responsible for the work. Grantees are also responsible for understanding and following all program requirements and procedures.

Conflict of Interest

State Grant Policy 08-01, Conflict of Interest for State Grant-making, also applies to grantees. Please review this policy to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. Applications may be rejected or grants cancelled if conflicts are found and not resolved to the State's satisfaction. Grantees will be required to sign a conflict of interest form.

Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCM)

Recipients of CPL grant funds must give consideration to and timely written contact to CCM for consideration of use of their services for restoration and enhancement work. CPL staff will help facilitate this requirement.

Current Conservation Science

All restorations must use current conservation science to achieve the best restoration results possible.

Invasive Species Requirements

The DNR requires active steps to prevent or limit the introduction, establishment, and spread of invasive species during all activities performed on all lands. Grantees must follow the procedures provided in Operational Order 113 (Invasive Species).

Use of Pesticides

DNR Operational Order 59 (Pesticides and Pest Control) and other appropriate discipline guidelines must be followed when using pesticides on all lands and waters, regardless of ownership.

Pollinator Habitat Enhancement

Habitat restoration or enhancement on DNR lands and prairie restorations using state funds must follow the DNR's Specific Pollinator Best Management Practices.

Vegetation and Seed Requirements

Seed mixes and plant lists must be approved by the Land Manager of the project site and shared with CPL Staff.

Prescribed Burning on State Lands

For prescribed burns on state lands, contractors must meet the equipment and personnel requirements (including training and experience) called for in the prescribed burn plan provided by the State. Additional requirements are described in the MN DNR Prescribed Burn Handbook.

Revenues

Any revenues generated during the grant period from activities on land acquired, restored, or enhanced with CPL funding must be disclosed to CPL staff and used for habitat purposes to be agreed upon.

Permitting and Environmental Compliance Requirements

The DNR, grantee, and contractors must comply with permitting requirements and environmental laws. Such compliance requires the participation and cooperation of the DNR, CPL grant applicant, appropriate Land Manager, and/or Easement Holder. The grantee is responsible for understanding and following all these requirements. These requirements apply to all projects.

Insurance

Grantees are required to carry insurance that meets or exceeds the requirements of the landowner whose land they will be working on. Insurance requirements for working on state lands are available on the CPL website. For all other lands, grantees should discuss insurance with the landowner/ land manager and follow their requirements. Proof of insurance will be required prior to a grant being executed. Applicants should investigate the cost of insurance before submitting an application.

Contractors

Contractors must be selected using the state's bidding process as outlined in the grant contract. Records of the bidding process must be retained in the grantee's file in case of audit. Contractors are subject to the same requirements as the grantee. It is strongly recommended that all contractors meet the same insurance requirements as the grantee. An organization's conflict of interest policy must be followed when selecting contractors.

Contractors will be required to certify that they have not been debarred or suspended from participation in federal assistance awards in accordance with 40 CFR Part 32. Suspended or debarred vendors may not be used for a CPL project, regardless if grant or match funds are being used to pay for contracted services. See the State of MN's Suspended/Debarred Vendor Report to check for potential conflicts before hiring contractors.

Prevailing Wage

It is the responsibility of the grant recipient or contractor to pay prevailing wages on all projects to which state prevailing wage laws apply (MN Statutes 177.42-177.44). Examples of applicable projects include construction or maintenance of roads, buildings, bridges, dams, and utilities. Additional information is available on the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) website. Questions should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091. The Grant recipient is solely responsible for payment of all required prevailing wage rates.

Grants and Public Information

Under MN Statutes 13.599, responses to an RFP are nonpublic until the application deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the applicant and the amount requested becomes public data. After the application evaluation process is completed, all application data (except trade secret data) becomes public. Data created during the evaluation process is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee(s) is completed. Sensitive information, such as Natural Heritage Database review information, will remain nonpublic.

MN Statutes 13.44 categorizes estimated or appraised value of real property prior to purchase and sale as confidential data on individuals, or protected nonpublic data. Once property transactions are completed, the location and landowner information will become public information. See the Minnesota Government Data Privacy Act for more information.

Logo, Signage, and Recognition

Recipients must display a sign with the Legacy logo at all project sites near an access or entrance point. These signs are provided for by the CPL program, and will be delivered to the grant recipient or land manager for installation. Sign orders will be collected by CPL staff from project managers via email in February 2027.

The Legacy logo shall be incorporated, where practical, into printed and other materials funded with CPL funds. The Legacy logo may be downloaded from the Minnesota Legacy website's Legacy Logo page for publications, press releases or other printed documents. Only the approved logo may be used.

All press releases, bid solicitations, statements or other documents issued describing the project should acknowledge the Outdoor Heritage Fund primarily, and may secondarily acknowledge the Department of Natural Resources and the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program.

Purchase of Recycled and Recyclable Materials

Grantees and any subgrantees must use grant funds in compliance with Minnesota Statue sections 16C.0725, regarding purchase of recycled, repairable, and durable materials, and 16C.073, regarding purchase and use of paper stock and printing.

Acquisition Requirements

Applicants applying for fee title acquisitions should review the requirements and information found on the Land Acquisition page of the CPL website prior to applying for funding.

Grantees must follow all requirements set in MS 97A.056. Applicants should especially note Subd. 8 Land revenues, Subd. 15. Land acquisition restrictions, and Subd. 16. Real property interest report. Acquisitions must be from willing sellers, and potential tracts must be identified in the application. Acquisitions may not impede existing snowmobile trails. The final title holder and land manager must be specified in the application. Lands that will be conveyed to a public agency must be donated to that agency.

Easement Acquisition

Applications intending to acquire permanent conservation easements must follow the requirements as described in MS 97A.056 and meet MN Statutes 84C. All easements must:

- Be permanent;
- Specify the parties to an easement in the easement;
- Specify all the provisions of an agreement that are permanent;
- Specify the habitat types and location being protected;
- When appropriate for conservation or water protection outcomes, require the grantor to employ practices retaining water on the eased land as long as practicable;
- Specify the responsibilities of the parties for habitat enhancement and restoration and the associated costs of these activities;
- Include a long-term stewardship plan and funding for monitoring/enforcing the agreement; and
- Identify the parties responsible for monitoring and enforcing the easement agreement.

The proposed easement and stewardship plan must be sent to the DNR for review prior to closing. Appraisals for conservation easements must be done by a trained and experienced appraiser. If the DNR will be a party to the easement, appropriate DNR staff must be involved in easement discussions and stewardship plan writing.

Conveying Land to the DNR

Applicants intending to acquire land that will be conveyed to the DNR must follow Land Acquisition Procedures for Land to Be Conveyed to DNR. All proposed tracts must be on the DNR's approved acquisition priority list prior to the application deadline. Applicants should work with the DNR manager who will manage the land to make sure all parcels have the prior approvals needed.

Land Acquisition Fees for Acquisition of Lands to be Conveyed to the DNR

A DNR acquisition specialist will be assigned to each awarded project involving the purchase of land to be conveyed to the DNR. To pay for these costs, a fee of $10,000 for each parcel should be included in the grant proposal budget. These costs count towards the maximum grant award of $500,000. If the initial planned parcel(s) falls through and the grantee seeks permission to pursue a new parcel, the grantee may be asked to cover added staff time fees out of their grant budget. New parcels must provide comparable habitat value.

Initial Development Plan (IDP)

Initial Development Plans (IDPs) are required on all fee-title acquisitions that will be transferred to the DNR, and may be required by other entities that will own or manage lands acquired with CPL funds. These plans lay out the specific work necessary to bring a parcel up to minimum standards for public use, including boundary posting, signs, parking lots, habitat development and site clean-up. The IDP may be paid for with either grant or match funds, and those plans are incorporated into the Land Manager Review and Approval Form. The application's budget page must reflect the information contained on the IDP form if grant or match funds are to be used. See DNR Development Standards for WMA/AMAs for more information for lands that will be conveyed to DNR as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) or Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs). Contact the appropriate Land Manager for information on other lands.

Acquisitions for Land not to be Conveyed to the DNR

Applicants intending to acquire land that will not be conveyed to DNR must follow Land Acquisition Procedures for Land NOT Conveyed to DNR. Applicants should discuss requirements and approvals with the entity that will be receiving the land prior to application. The appraisal and appraisal review must be submitted to CPL staff.

Acquisition Closing Packet

For all acquisitions, grantees must submit an acquisition packet within 60 days of the closing. This packet must contain:

- Documentation of the selection process used to identify the parcels acquired;
- Documentation of all related transaction costs for all parties involved in the transaction, including but not limited to appraisals, legal fees, recording fees, commissions, and donations;
- Documentation of any difference between the acquisition amount paid to the seller and the state-certified or state-reviewed appraisal; and
- An analysis describing the increased operations and management costs likely to be incurred by public entities as a result of the acquisition, and how these costs will be paid.

Notice of Funding Restrictions (NOFR)

Grantees who acquire land in fee title or easement must record a Notice of Funding Restrictions (NOFR) in the local government office where the conveyance of the interest in real property is filed. The NOFR must contain:

- A legal description of the property.
- A reference to the grant contract.
- A reference to 97A.056, Subd. 15(c).
- The following statement: "This interest in real property shall be administered in accordance with the terms, conditions, and purposes of the grant agreement controlling the acquisition of the property. The interest in real property, or any portion of the interest in real property, shall not be sold, transferred, pledged, or otherwise disposed of or further encumbered without obtaining the prior written approval of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council or its successor. The ownership of the interest in real property transfers to the state if: (1) the holder of the interest in real property fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement or accomplishment plan; or (2) restrictions are placed on the land that preclude its use for the intended purpose as specified in the appropriation."

State Agency Contact Information

David Stein, CPL Program Coordinator
651-259-5375
David.stein@state.mn.us
Division of Fish and Wildlife
MN Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box #20
Saint Paul, MN 55155-4020

Amy Yoelin, CPL Program Administrator
651-259-5536
amy.yoelin@state.mn.us
Division of Fish and Wildlife
MN Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box #20
Saint Paul, MN 55155-4020

Karis Ritenour, CPL Grants Specialist
651-259-5218
Karis.ritenour@state.mn.us
Division of Fish and Wildlife
MN Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box #20
Saint Paul, MN 55155-4020

Appendix A: CPL Application

Section 1: Project Contact Information and Overview

Project Contact Information

- Project Name
- Organization Name
- Organization Type
- Mailing Address
- City, State, and ZIP Code
- Project Manager Name
- Project Manager Title
- Project Manager Phone
- Project Manager Email

Project Overview

- County Name
- Project Site Name
- Total Project Sites
- Total Project Acres
- Primary Land Ownership
- Additional Land Ownership
- Primary Habitat Type
- Additional Habitat Types
- Primary Activity
- Additional Activities
- ECP Activities (For ECP applications only)

Project Funding Summary

- Grant Type
- Grant Request Level
- Total Grant Amount Requested
- Total Match Amount Pledged
- Additional Funding Amount
- Total Project Cost

Section 2: Project Summary

Has your organization ever received CPL or OHF funds before?

Project Location Summary

- Primary County
- Project Site Name
- Primary Land Ownership

Habitat and Activity Summary

- Primary Habitat Type
- Primary Activity
- Total Project Sites
- Total Project Acres

Question 1: Summary (2500 Characters)

Provide a clear, concise summary of what your proposal is about. This summary will be used to describe your project to reviewers and other parties.

Question 2: Problem Statement (2500 Characters)

Describe the specific need or problem that is being addressed, why it is important, how it was identified, and what is affected by it. Include any facts or statistics that support it, and a pre-project description of the site(s).

Question 3: Project Objectives (2500 Characters)

Explain the expected results and benefits of the project. List specific, measurable results that you expect to accomplish. Specifically provide information on any and all habitat benefits of the project, and how the budget is cost effective. Indicate if site is adjacent to protected land and if there are multiple benefits resulting from the project.

Question 4: Methods (2500 Characters)

Describe in detail the activities that will take place in order to achieve the desired results and WHY you have chosen them. Include methods, materials, and who will do the work.

Question 5: Experience/Abilities (1500 Characters)

Describe your organization's ability to successfully complete this work, including experience in the area of interest and ability to successfully implement the proposed project. Include descriptions of your most recent grant experience and if the expected outcomes were achieved.

Question 6: BIPOC and Diverse Communities (2500 Characters)

How will your organization directly involve, engage, and benefit BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), diverse, and other underrepresented communities with this project or through other activities?

Question 7: Project Timeline

Please provide measurable project goals and the time frame (month, season, and/or year) that your organization plans to achieve those goals.

Question 8: Estimated Project Completion Date

When do you expect your project to be completed? Projects must be completed by June 30, 2030.

Section 3: Budget

Fiscal Contact Information

- Fiscal Contact Name
- Fiscal Contact Title
- Fiscal Contact Email Address
- Fiscal Contact Phone Number
- Fiscal Contact Street Address
- Fiscal Contact City, State, and Zip Code

Budget Details

All budget items must be added to the correct budget category using the on-screen instructions.

Grant and Match descriptions must be on separate lines. Use whole dollar amounts only with no commas or decimals.

Grant Funds: Expenditures to be reimbursed from the grant. This may include up to X% for personnel costs (can be used for both administrative and for on-the-ground project work).

Match Funds: A 10% minimum match is required. Match must come from the applicant or partner contributions and originate from a non-state source.

Budget categories include the following:

- Personnel
- Contracts
- Fee Acquisition with PILT (For acquisition projects only)
- Fee Acquisition without PILT (For acquisition projects only)
- Easement Acquisition (For acquisition projects only)

- Travel (In-State)
- Professional Services
- DNR Land Acquisition Costs (For acquisition projects only)
- Equipment/Tools/Supplies
- Additional Budget Items

Additional Funding Amount

Additional funds are dollars used toward the project that are not grant funds or counted as match. You must describe the source of any additional funding and how the funds will be applied to the project.

Section 4: Project Information (For Statewide, Metro, and New Applicant Projects Only)

Please answer each of the following questions in 1000 characters or less:

Question 1: Collaboration

Describe the degree of collaboration and local support for this project.

Question 2: Urgency

Describe any urgency associated with this project.

Question 3: Funding

Discuss if there is full funding secured for this project, the sources of that funding and if CPL Grant funds will supplement or supplant existing funding.

Question 4: Public Access

Describe public access at project site for hunting and fishing, identifying all open seasons.

Question 5: Native Vegetation

Discuss your project's use of native vegetation (if applicable).

Question 6: Budget

Discuss your project's budget and why it is cost effective.

Question 7: Culture of Conservation

Provide information on how your organization encourages a local conservation culture. This includes your organization's history of promoting conservation in the local area, visibility of work to the public and any activities and outreach your organization has completed in the local area.

Question 8: Invasive Species

Does your project involve the removal of invasive species? If yes, please describe your long term management plan after the project has been completed. If you have a plan you would like to submit with the application (recommended), please attach it on the attachments tab.

Question 9: Wildlife

What specific species of wildlife will benefit from your project? Please provide details of how these species' habitats will be restored, enhanced, or created.

Section 5: Site Information

Land Manager Information

- Land Manager Name
- Land Manager's Organization
- Land Manager's Title
- Land Manager's Phone Number
- Land Manager's Email Address

The signed Land Manager Review and Approval Form must be uploaded in this section.

Site Information

Your site must be mapped using the online site mapping tool in this section. Instructions for how to use this tool are found on the CPL Online Application System.

- Site Name
- Habitat Type
- CPL Activity
- Land Ownership
- Project Acres
- Is the site open to public hunting?
- Is the site open to public fishing?
- Have you ever had OHF grant funding for a project on this site?
- Will you receive any revenues during the grant period from activities on this land?

If your project will take place in a public water, you must also have the DNR Area Hydrologist complete the Public Waters Project Form and upload it in this section.

Section 6: Natural Heritage Database Review

A Natural Heritage Database Review must be completed prior to the applicant completing this section. If the Project Manager, Land Manager, or easement holder cannot access the Natural Heritage Information System, ***they must contact CPL Grant Staff for assistance at least 7 days prior to the application deadline***. CPL staff will complete the review free of charge. To request a Natural Heritage Information System Review please send the following information directly to LSCPLGrants.DNR@state.mn.us:

- 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.

Once the review has been completed, please answer the following questions:

Question 1:

Were any Natural Heritage elements found within one mile of your project sites?

Question 2 (1200 Characters):

List all Natural Heritage elements found within one mile of your project's site(s) and discuss how you will mitigate or avoid impacts to these elements.

Section 7: Attachments

Financial Information (For Non-Profit Applicants Requesting Over $25,000 Only)

Please submit financial documentation based on your organization's annual income:

a) Less than $50,000 - most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
b) $50,000-$749,999 - most recent IRS Form 990.
c) $750,000 and up- most recent certified financial audit.

Additional Documentation

Attach additional documentation as applicable using the appropriate categories below. If you exceed the size limit while uploading, contact CPL staff to discuss your options.

Additional Attachment Categories Include:

- Letters of Support
- Partner Commitment Letters
- Photos
- Restoration Plans
- Engineering/Survey/Design Plans
- Supplemental Documents

Section 8: Final Application Submission

Please take the time to revisit the previous sections and make sure you have entered everything completely and correctly. Once you hit the submit button, you will not be able to return to your application to make changes.

Please certify the following statements to submit your application:

1) I certify that I have read the Conservation Partners Legacy Grants Program Request for Proposal, Program Manual and other program documents, and have discussed this project with the appropriate public land manager, or private landowner and easement holder.
2) I certify that all of the information contained in the application is correct as of the time of the submission. If anything should change, I will contact CPL Grant Staff immediately to make corrections.
3) I certify that if funded I will give consideration to and make timely written contact to Minnesota Conservation Corps or its successor for consideration of possible use of their services to contract for restoration and enhancement services. I will provide CPL staff a copy of that written contact within 10 days after the execution of my grant, should I be awarded.
4) I certify that I am aware that at least one Land Manager Review and Approval form is required for every application and at least one Public Waters Contact form is required for all public waters work. I am aware I must submit all completed forms by uploading them into this application. I have attached the required type and number of forms as necessary for this project.
5) I certify that I have no actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest related to the project as described in this application.
6) I am aware that by typing my name in the box below, I am applying my signature to this online document.

Appendix B: CPL Application Evaluation Criteria

Traditional, Metro, and New Applicant applications are scored based on the 6 criteria listed below, using only the information provided within the application. Applicants should be sure their applications contain enough information for reviewers to consider all 6 criteria. This table is also available as a stand-alone document on the CPL website.

1. Overall Project Value

Criteria Element	Description
Critical Habitat Corridor; Habitat Quality/Quantity	Amount, quality and/or connectivity of habitat restored, protected and/or enhanced.
Consistent with current conservation science	Project use of currently accepted science and methods, increased efficiency and life expectancy of work completed.
Sustainability	Overall life expectancy of project
Use of native plants	Use of local ecotype, native vegetation in form of seed, seedlings, root stock, etc. Seed and plant lists attached to application.

2. Applicant Performance

Criteria Element	Description
Encouragement of local conservation culture	Applicant's past activities with local community in regards to conservation
Collaboration and local support	Applicant's current interaction with other groups or agencies; current application support by multiple entities
Capacity to successfully complete work	Applicant's history of receiving and successfully completing conservation work and grants

3. Project Benefits

Criteria Element	Description
Multiple benefits	Multiple or diverse species benefits; project directly improves intended species, indirect benefit to others
Habitat benefits	Multiple or diverse habitat benefits; project directly improves intended habitat, indirect benefit to others

4. Benefits to the Public

Criteria Element	Description
Adjacent to protected lands	Project site(s) proximity to current protected land (public or private)
Public access	Project site(s) availability for hunting, fishing and other wildlife-based recreation.

5. Financial Assessment

Criteria Element	Description
Full funding of project	All costs are identified and accounted for; all partners have submitted letters committing funds
Supplements existing funding	Project would not be completed without CPL funding; CPL does not replace traditional sources of funding
Budget and cost effectiveness	Project is succinct- no unnecessary costs or work has been added; costs are relative to location of project

6. Project Urgency

Criteria Element	Description
Urgency	Funding importance at this time: species or opportunity potentially lost