Connecticut Land Conservation Council
Climate Smart Land Stewardship Grants
Frequently Asked Questions

For more information about the topics below or questions not answered here, please contact Ricky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, at rbentley@ctconservation.org or at 860-852-5512.

<u>**Climate Smart Practices**</u>

What is meant by climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation?
Mitigation - reducing or removing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, e.g. by increasing carbon sequestration and storage

Resilience - ability of an ecosystem to withstand or respond quickly to disturbance and return to a prior condition

Adaptation - actions that intentionally accommodate change and allow ecosystems to respond to future conditions

For more information about mitigation, resilience and adaptation, please see:
- [Natural Resources Conservation Service Climate Smart Agriculture & Forestry Fact Sheet](#)
- [Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS)](#)
- [NIACS Adaptation Workbook](#)

What are climate smart land stewardship practices?
Many types of land stewardship activities can contribute to enhanced climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation and are therefore climate smart land stewardship practices.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides an extensive [list of climate smart activities](#) related to agriculture and forestry. Potential applicants are encouraged to consult this list even if their project does not relate directly to agriculture or forestry, since many of the practices may also be applied to other types of land.

Can our project address more than one of the types of climate benefits (mitigation, resilience, adaptation)?
Yes! Projects can and should be designed to have multiple climate benefits.

What kinds of lands can these climate smart practices be implemented on?
These practices can be applied on forested land, agricultural land, grasslands, wetlands, parklands and more. Most types of land that land trusts protect could benefit from climate smart land stewardship.

How do we know if the land stewardship activities we have in mind are climate smart?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service list of climate smart activities is a good place to start. If you have additional questions, feel free to contact Ricky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, at rbentley@ctconservation.org or at 860-852-5512 to discuss your proposed project.

Note that land stewardship activities that do not contribute directly to enhanced mitigation, resilience or adaptation can be funded as part of the project, but only if they are required for the successful implementation of climate smart practices. For example, invasive plant removal in preparation for targeted forest improvement work is fundable, while ongoing invasive plant removal without a clear plan is not.

Application Process

Can an organization submit more than one application at the same time?
No. An organization may only submit one application at a time.

Can an organization receive multiple Climate Smart Land Stewardship Grants?
An organization can receive more than one grant from CLCC's Climate Smart Land Stewardship program (e.g. a Planning Grant followed by an Implementation Grant), but cannot apply for a second grant until the first grant is completed and reporting requirements have been met.

I'm confused about something in the application or feel that the process that is described will pose problems for my organization/project. What should I do?
Please reach out to CLCC as soon as possible to discuss your question or concern.Ricky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, is available to answer applicant questions and can be reached at rbentley@ctconservation.org or at 860-852-5512.

The application says that a map is required, but our organization does not have GIS capabilities. What should we do?
Maps are required as part of the application, but should not be a barrier to any applicant. There are many free online tools available to help with map-making and your regional Council of Government (COG) may also be able to assist you in creating a map. Please contact Ricky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, to discuss the map format and tools that will best suit your project.

If you are submitting a management plan that includes maps of the project area, these fulfill the map requirement and additional maps are not needed.

Our project requires contractor/consultant assistance. Do we need a quote?
Yes. Quotes or estimates from contractors/consultants that will be engaged as part of the proposed project are required. Quotes should be submitted as attachments to the application and must be dated within 90 days of the date the application is submitted.

Project Planning

We are applying for a Planning Grant. What kind of standards does our plan need to meet? What kind of professional should we contract to develop the plan?

This depends on the type of project and the goals of the applicant. A plan appropriate for a 5-acre pollinator meadow installation is different from a plan appropriate for a 50-acre forest management project.

Applicants should ensure that contracted professionals have the necessary expertise and certifications/licenses to complete the work for which they are contracted. *For example, applicants interested in planning for or implementing active forest management should contract with a forester who is licensed in the state of Connecticut (HERE is a helpful directory from CT Forest and Park Association).*

Applicants who intend to seek implementation funding for their projects after the planning phase is complete should ensure that the plans they develop meet the requirements of their targeted funding sources.

We are applying for an Implementation Grant and already have a plan for our project. Should we submit the plan?

Yes! Submission of documentation related to the project area is highly encouraged. This can include current, past or prospective management plans, vulnerability assessments and other documents that will help reviewers understand the context for the proposed project. These documents can be included as attachments to the application.

What is the project duration and payment process for Implementation Grants?

Because Implementation Grant projects vary in their scale and complexity, timeline and payment schedule are tailored to the individual project. All Implementation Grants must be completed no later than April 30, 2027; however, not all projects will require this amount of time to complete. Applicants should align their proposed project timeline with the needs of their project and are strongly encouraged to present a realistic, well-supported rationale for the project duration they propose. Applicants anticipating the need for multi-year grants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible to allow time for project completion.

Implementation Grant payments are linked to the completion of Key Project Milestones - see next question.

What are Key Project Milestones and how should we determine them for our Implementation Grant project?

Key Project Milestones represent the steps to be completed in the implementation of the proposed project. Once the completion of a Key Project Milestone has been documented and verified, payment will be made and the project can proceed to the next step. For example, for a meadow installation project, the first Key Project Milestone might be site preparation, followed by plant installation, followed by meadow maintenance.

The Key Project Milestones will be used in the development of grant contracts.

If you have questions about establishing appropriate Key Project Milestones for your project, please contact Ricky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, at rbentley@ctconservation.org or at 860-852-5512.

Our project includes planting. Do we have to use native species?
In general, yes. Use of species native to the State of Connecticut is required unless a project demonstrates the need to use a non-invasive, non-native species for a particular purpose (e.g. agricultural cover crops). Applicants proposing use of non-native species should provide a thorough rationale in their application.

Resources for determining appropriate native species include:
- Native Plant Trust: https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service:
  - TREES: https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CT/CTNativeTreeandShrubAvailabilityListCTDEEP.pdf
  - SHRUBS: https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CT/RecommendedNativeConnecticutPerennialsDraft9-26-2015.xls
  - RIPARIAN CORRIDOR: https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CT/Riparian_Corridor_Plants.pdf

All applicants and their contracted professionals should use appropriate best management practices to prevent the accidental spread of invasive species (e.g. heat-treatment of mulch, inspection of plant material, cleaning of equipment).

Financial

Are contractor/consultant fees an eligible expense?
Yes, for both Planning Grants and Implementation Grants, as long as they are directly related to the climate smart project. A quote/estimate dated within 90 days of application is required.

Is equipment purchase or rental an eligible expense?
Yes, as long as it is directly related to the implementation of the climate smart project. Applicants should demonstrate how the requested equipment fits into the context of the proposed project; equipment costs should not be the sole focus of an application.

What kinds of materials are eligible expenses?
Materials directly related to the implementation of the climate smart project are eligible. The nature of the project will determine the needed materials. Some examples of eligible materials are: plant materials, planting supplies, fencing supplies, soil enhancement materials & fertilizers, mulch, materials to deter herbivory and materials to deter unwanted vegetation.

Herbicide is an eligible expense, though it is expected that the applicant demonstrates that it is required for project success and that it will be used in compliance with all legal, safety, and other best management practices. For questions about whether particular materials are eligible, please contact Ricky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, at rbentley@ctconservation.org or at 860-852-5512.

Is staff or administrative time an eligible expense?
Staff and administrative time is not eligible to be funded by this grant but we encourage applicants to include it as an in-kind match.

Are organizational overhead costs an eligible expense?
Overhead costs are not eligible to be funded by this grant but we encourage applicants to include it as an in-kind match.

Can volunteer time be used as match?
Yes, volunteer time can be used as an in-kind match, valued using Independent Sector's current value for volunteer time in Connecticut. (Visit this page and choose 'Download State-by-State Data'.) Volunteer time cannot be used in place of a cash match.

Our project requires additional funding beyond this grant. How do we explain our situation in the application?
This should be explained in the Budget Worksheet. For other funding sources, please describe status (e.g. applied for, pledged, secured) in the 'Description/Justification' column. If not all additional funding has been secured at the time of application, please explain what the organization plans to do if not all funds are received. For example, the project might be scaled back to be achievable with a smaller budget. If a project cannot be successfully completed without currently-pending funding sources (e.g. if it requires a large equipment purchase), please contactRicky Bentley, Climate Smart Land Stewardship Coordinator, at rbentley@ctconservation.org or at 860-852-5512 to discuss.

The Grant Guidance document states that ex post facto reimbursement of Planning Grant match is possible for applicants that subsequently apply for and receive an Implementation Grant. How does this work?
Planning Grants require a 25% cash match. This match must be provided by the grant recipient as part of the Planning Grant project. If an organization subsequently applies for and is awarded an Implementation Grant through this program for continuation of the same project, the cash match provided by the organization during the Planning Grant project can be included in the Implementation Grant budget and, pending available funding, may be reimbursed.

Can you provide a sample Budget Worksheet for an Implementation Grant?

Yes. See this [sample budget](#) for an imaginary meadow installation project. Keep in mind that budgets are built around Key Project Milestones and will vary substantially from one project to another.