

Wisconsin Landowner Incentive Program

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General Questions

Active management-what does this mean? *Active Management* is a management approach in which landowners actively manipulate habitat/ecosystems through practices such as timber harvesting and thinning, mowing, clearing and restoring habitat to improve forest health and to create habitat for wildlife.

What are examples of potential habitat for LIP? Prairie and Savanna habitats ranging from wet, wet-mesic, mesic, dry-mesic, and mesic prairies, to oak savanna, oak barrens, and oak woodlands. For more details, see the Endangered Resources [Natural Community web pages](#).

Would building a pond to attract wildlife covered under LIP? LIP does not build ponds to attract wildlife, however naturally occurring ephemeral pond habitat or hydrology restoration may be eligible.

Is there a difference between applying for money for one year vs. the full three years? The applicant must decide which technique is the best for their property and the management of their habitat.

Will LIP partially fund some projects because of the amounts requested? Partial funding may be granted to projects based on budget assessment. LIP may also request that a project be scaled down and award a reduced amount if other high-priority projects may also be funded as a result. Make sure what you propose to do is feasible to accomplish within the Grant Agreement Period. You can also apply to finish the rest of the project the following year.

Please explain the 75-25 payment plan associated with LIP? The 75-25 plan means that Wisconsin DNR, through a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will reimburse the landowner up to 75% of the cost for the on-the-ground practices that are involved in the management of the project. The landowner is required to come up with the 25% match. This match can be financial (cash) or can be an in-kind (labor and equipment) contribution. Projects offering match above the minimum 25% will score higher.

Is there a higher priority for creating new habitat or maintain those that are already there? Projects that will restore or enhance already existing habitat will score higher than projects that aim to create new habitat. In some cases, recreation of a seriously altered habitat may still score high enough to be funded based on the other criteria (example: seeding an agricultural field with previous supported plants in order to restore continuity to a prairie mosaic). Projects must also provide benefits to at-risk species. Projects looking to build habitat where it did not previously occur based on historical evidence will not be considered.

Prairie Restoration, do you require native seed? In every case we will encourage native stock. We realize that this can be more expensive, but it is important to preserve the naturally occurring regional genetic variation and to prevent non-native stock from occurring outside its natural range. LIP can direct you to sources for species native to your area.

I want to keep a small piece of my total acreage out of the LIP managed area for a house in the future. Can I do this and still be considered for LIP? The only requirement is to maintain the “project area” in the same land use for the length of the contract. The rest of your property will not be considered as the LIP Project Area.

I don't know what the land I just bought is best suited for in terms of species-at-risk. Where do I get help finding out what's there? LIP staff may be able to provide you with species known to be in your area or species that you should manage for. Other sources might be local agency staff, historic vegetation maps of your area, Wisconsin's Wildlife Action plan, e-bird, the State herbarium website, and State Natural Areas. A list of these resources is available on the “References” page of the LIP website.

How is the average landowner supposed to know what habitat improvements are needed for wildlife? Landowners can work with Land Trusts, Conservation Organizations, Contractors who focus on Restoration, Town Conservation Commissions and other professionals. LIP also provides Technical Assistance within its priority areas. Another good place for information is the DNR's [Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan: Explore by County web page](#).

My habitat has been severely degraded some years ago. How do I go about assigning what is possible to create or recreate to put a long-term management plan together? Technical questions such as this are best addressed through consultation with a professional. The LIP biologists, restoration contractors, local conservation groups, and land trusts would be good places to start.

How does the average private landowner compete with the NGO's in this process? Will there be any consideration to spread the grant money to private landowners who do not do this type of work for a living? This grant process was set up for the benefit of wildlife on private lands so that everyone from individuals to groups like Land Trusts and Conservation Organizations would be able to receive money to restore and create wildlife habitat. The Request for Proposals (RFP) is designed to be a fair and equitable process regardless of the applicant's technical writing ability. LIP staff are available to assist you in writing your proposals including reviewing proposals and providing feedback prior to the assistance deadline.

A sample management plan would be helpful to applicants. Please see the [LIP website](#) for a sample management plan.

Who can I hire to help write my management plan? It is not required to hire a professional to develop a management plan for your property. Some Management Plans can be very simple. The Landowner Incentive Program can assist you in developing a management plan and objectives for your property, as will some land trusts, NGOs, consulting firms, and contractors. Be aware that some of these sources may charge for this service. You do not need to have a completed management plan in place prior to applying to LIP. If your project is selected, LIP will work with you to develop a management plan before the project begins.

Several guides are also available, including [Putting Pen to Paper: Developing your wildlife management plan](#)

Will grant winners be listed in a public way somewhere? Some people may not want to have it known that their land is open to the public and would not want to have their names out in the public. Project descriptions are listed on the LIP website by county. Some of the information pertaining to LIP grants is subject to Wisconsin Open Records Law and will be given out upon request. Sensitive information such as the location of at-risk species, is protected from Open Records Law due to the vulnerability of rare species to collection and destruction.

Do we expect that there will be continued funding in future years for this program? Is long-term funding guaranteed? Continued funding for the LIP Program is not guaranteed. LIP is a federally funded, competitive grant program and funding to the states can fluctuate from year to year. However, if you receive LIP project funding, you are guaranteed full funding for the duration of your contract.

In this particular project, they want to rotationally graze cows to keep the open field habitat open. Is this an appropriate practice for LIP? Grazing for maintenance can be a good way to keep an area open. Grazing can also be an important tool for maintaining grassland bird habitat. However, you must have a

plan which will assure that the site is not overgrazed and that outlines plans to move your herd around to different areas to allow the understory to grow up into suitable wildlife habitat.

Do I understand the program correctly that you will pay for one year of activity but require a ten year commitment on my part? Yes, the contract keeps the land in the same landuse for the term of the contract. That protects the State's investment into the private landowner's property.

What is the difference between the length of the contract and the length of time when the money can be spent? The funded grant period is one year. The Contract length will be longer and reflects the landowner commitment to the wildlife conservation. This means that the LIP Project Area has to be kept in the same landuse for that amount of time.

If the landowner is willing to commit 10 year commitment is the state making a similar commitment? The State cannot commit financially to more than what is defined in the funded period. The commitment the landowner is making is to only keep the LIP Project Area in the same landuse. The landowner is not required to actively manage the LIP Project Area for the length of the contract (only for the year in which the grant money was received). However, the landowner may rank higher in future grant rounds for additional management on that project because of the landowners commitment and the State's investment in your property.

Will maps help the application? Yes, the more detailed map you can provide, the better it will be for the biologists ranking the applications to identify what is happening with your property.

I have a deer yard on the farm. How will this rank? Can I use LIP money for supplemental feeding? This grant was set up to benefit Species-At-Risk. This type of project would not be considered. Projects must be for the benefit of Species-at-risk. LIP will not fund supplemental feeding.

Will you fund a wetlands project? The focus Driftless Area communities for funding include prairie, savanna, and woodland. We will consider wet prairie projects in the priority areas.

Where do I go to get a LIP pre-proposal or application? These forms will be accepted and made available on the LIP website during the annual RFP. You may also request copies from the LIP coordinator.

Is there a list of ranking criteria available? The Ranking Criteria is available on the LIP Website and is included with the application materials.

How are points awarded for the ranking criteria? Points are awarded for each category or number.

Are there limits on the upper and lower sizes or amounts of projects?

No, there is no minimum or maximum acreage for projects, awards must be between \$2,500 and \$25,000.

Can this money be used to purchase a Conservation easement? Not at this time.

I know my property was never inventoried for the Natural Heritage Inventory. If I get one of these grants will the information developed about species be of interest to NHI? Yes, the information could be beneficial to NHI.

Does Wisconsin LIP encourage partnerships? Involving other landowners to work together on lands that are nearby or adjacent to their property to create a much larger habitat for wildlife is encouraged and may improve ranking.

Location and Protection Questions

Does degree of site protection matter in the application? Yes. The greater the degree of protection, the higher the ranking in the criteria.

In a Condominium Association, their meadows have return to woodlands. The project is adjacent to protected National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) AND Town Conservation Land. Should applications emphasize complementary management on surrounding properties? Yes.

Are lands in MFL, WHIP, and other NRCS programs eligible? In many cases, LIP can partner with efforts of other programs. However, it is critical that you first check with the program's administrator or local forester or biologist to be certain that the management practices you are proposing for LIP funds are compatible with the contract or agreement you may have with these other programs. Project lands enrolled in CRP are not eligible for LIP funding. However, lands adjacent to CRP may be eligible for LIP.

What if I have an existing Forestry Management Plan in place? If you have a Forestry Plan in place you should consult your forester to review your Stewardship Plan. You may use a Forestry plan to help write your LIP or overall property Management Plan. Just make sure that your LIP Management Plan does not interfere with your Forestry Plan.

I have land next to protected land, is this a good fit for LIP? Yes. It is part of our Ranking Criteria.

Does the tax status of the land in an application make any difference? Tax status itself does not make a difference. However, degree of protection is a Ranking Criteria.

Application Questions

What do we need to provide to Wisconsin LIP for a complete application? The applicant must supply LIP with 1 copy of each of the following: 1) LIP pre-proposal (must be approved to move on), 2) A completed LIP project application, and 3) A map with the project area marked (LIP staff may help you to produce this). Additionally, you may attach management plans, site biological inventory lists, and other materials to support your application. Please note that the review committee will not reference these attachments for the information requested in the application. The application must be a stand-alone document. Completed applications are due prior to the announced deadline posted in the RFR.

Can you go over the schedule of deadlines (when work can commence, when work will be completed)? These deadlines will be posted on the LIP website. Please note the earliest possible work date and do not factor work to begin before this date into your application.

I am not computer savvy. How do I get the information such as site maps and species information? Maps or aerial photos may be available from your County Office or public library. You may also contact the LIP coordinator for assistance on obtaining maps and species information for your property.

Can the grant be used for monitoring? LIP funding cannot be used for monitoring. Monitoring can be included as a match activity if it is necessary and reasonable to accomplish the project objectives and within the grant agreement period. LIP is an implementation grant for active wildlife habitat management so monitoring should be a small component of the total grant request.

LIP requires that we be able to measure the success of our projects -are research and monitoring costs covered by the reimbursement? Research and monitoring are not covered by this grant. Monitoring can go towards the match component when it is an evaluation tool, if within grant period and applicable to grant.

Should the management plan be for the whole property or just the LIP Project Area in the application? The management plan should include the specific LIP Project Area that you are applying for. However, you are encouraged to note your overall plan for your whole property.

I would like to apply for more than one project, is that possible? What is the best way to submit a grant that involves several parcels? Yes, you may apply more than once per landowner. If the lands are owned by different landowners, each landowner has to submit the necessary LIP forms for the land that

they own.

Am I better off bundling all the parcels I want to submit as one application or should they each be identified under separate applications? This depends on the project. If the parcels will make a complete project across more than one parcel or ownership boundary, they can be all filed together as one “complete” project. If the project sites are more isolated or have different objectives, you should apply for each one separately. You need to have a separate application, and map for each project you apply for.

My pre-proposal was approved last round, but my project was not funded. Do I need to submit a new pre-proposal if I wish to apply again? You do not need to submit a new pre-proposal, but you do need to notify the LIP coordinator of your intent to apply within the pre-proposal acceptance time frame. You may do this via phone, e-mail, or letter.

My pre-proposal was approved last round, but I did not submit a full application. Do I need to submit a new pre-proposal if I wish to apply again? You do not need to submit a new pre-proposal, but you do need to notify the LIP coordinator of your intent to apply within the pre-proposal acceptance time frame. You may do this via phone, e-mail, or letter.

Would a collaborative grant application including several landowners rank higher than another? Yes, any collaboration that looks at a landscape scale to link habitats together will rank high.

Should the application show costs for work that will be required in other years or just for work needed in the grant agreement period? The Budget should only show only the costs for the practices that will occur within the proposed funded grant period.

Should the work plan include work that will be completed after the project period? The Work plan should only denote work on the LIP project site during the funded period. Work on the site after this period can be described in the follow-up section and will rank your application higher.

I’m clearing a savanna using USDA money and it only gets me so far. Can I use LIP to clear stumps to finish the project? LIP funding can be used to augment a project started by another program, and we encourage this type of cooperation. You will need to make sure that the projects are distinct, either in different geographic areas of the site or with different objectives/purposes. LIP cannot fund the same work that was agreed to be accomplished with funding from the other program. Also note that LIP may not be used to **match** other Federal funding such as WHIP or Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and vice versa.

Will we be providing a list of potential vendors? No. That is one of the strong points of this program. You can work with anyone. If your uncle Mike has a brush-hog you can use that and may actually work to your advantage in terms of match. LIP may be able to direct you towards contractors who do restoration work in your area if you desire.

Do vendors that we contract with have to be approved by the state? No, since we are reimbursing the landowner, a grantee can contract with any vendor of their choice.

Would hiring a certified Wildlife Biologist be helpful in developing my application? There may be numerous benefits to hiring a Wildlife Biologists and foresters, but LIP staff are also available to assist you. There is no cost associated with LIP technical assistance, but as a result their availability may be limited.

Will LIP pay for prescribed burns as a practice? Yes, although the applicant is responsible for obtaining the necessary permits. Fire will be included in the list of practices that LIP funding may go to. It may also be used to create fire breaks and other pre-burn manipulations.

Does the State have equipment that is available for landowners to use? No.

Will LIP pay for financial losses resulting from implementing more ecologically beneficial practices (example, late mowing of hay fields)? We will pay for the practice implemented on the project area but not for the economic loss.

How does invasives control rank in LIP? Controlling and removing invasives and exotics as a practice must be tied to a benefit for at-risk species.

Does adding food, vegetation or shelter for wildlife qualify? Yes. We stress that restoring and creating wildlife habitat provides food and shelter. We will not fund supplemental activities (such as feed, physical structures etc...). Therefore, food plots or artificial ponds will not be considered.

If an application is focused on invasives control, what would LIP be paying for? Among other practices, LIP would fund purchase and application of herbicides, mowing, and prescribed burning. Choice of practice is at the discretion of the applicant given the ecology of the invasive or exotic and the means that need to be taken to eliminate it.

Does LIP want a management plan to be submitted along with the LIP application? It is not required. However, any additional information you can provide with your with your application (pictures, aerial photos, etc.) that will help the LIP Guidance Team Committee rank your application may help you.

Is there an advantage to having site map with the management plan? A site map is required for your application. The more detailed the map is the better the committee will be able to evaluate your application.

Who will be inspecting the completed projects? LIP staff may inspect projects before the work starts, during the work, and at the completion of the project. The contract you will sign will allow him or her on your property with advance notice to inspect the site.

Could I submit an application that would pay for fencing? Yes, if you can justify that this would protect or restore of habitats that benefit species-at-risk.

You say that you can work with an applicant to “tweak” a proposal. When does this occur, after they have been awarded the grant or during the review process? After they have been awarded the grant, small changes may be made that do not increase the grant award.

Does the landowner do all the contracting of the services? Yes, the landowner should be getting written and itemized quotes from contractors to do the work.

In the management plan, do we list wildlife we have encountered on the property? Yes, please include at-risk species on the property.

Should I include photos with my application? Photos are not required, but may be helpful in assessing the project. The more detail you can give about the property the easier it is for the LIP Guidance Team Committee to rank your project.

Can rotational grazing be used for invasives? Yes, grazing can as a practice and can be used to control invasives.

What maps are best? Maps should show the project area and as much detail as possible, such as a recent aerial photo (The entire state was aerial photographed in 2005-2006).

What do you mean by *feasible*? Feasibility is a *must* for any project that is to be funded. Can the work realistically be done during the grant agreement period? How does the project fit into the landscape habitat? Are the methods and costs appropriate for the project?

Financial Questions

Is there any flexibility with the budget during the contract? There is some flexibility with the budget. However, we will not increase the grant awarded amount. We will not reimburse beyond the amount agreed upon in the contract. We will not pick up the tab for poor cost estimation.

What are eligible costs? Eligible costs may include aspects of on-the-ground work such as wages of personnel directly engaged in the project scope, the purchase of supplies and equipment, costs of leased equipment, and costs of contracts or subcontracts to qualified vendors to perform project activities. Monitoring-related activities and donated labor are eligible as match only.

- a.) All costs must be supported by source documentation or other records as necessary to substantiate the funds. Such documents are subject to review by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife staff to determine the eligibility of costs.
- b.) Costs incurred prior to the effective start date of the grant agreement or after the close of the grant agreement are not allowed.
- c.) Administrative costs in the form of overhead or indirect costs are not allowable costs under the Landowner Incentive Program. This includes ordinary operating expenses of agencies that are not directly related to the project scope or incurred for a common or joint purpose including, utilities, administrative salaries, secretarial services and postage.
- d.) Project costs (or match) derived from any federal source are NOT allowable costs e.) Cost prohibited under state or local laws or regulations are not allowable costs
- f.) Costs must be consistent with state/federal policies, regulations, and procedures. LIP will not pay for fines and penalties due to failure to comply with federal, state or local regulations
- g.) Costs for which payment has been or will be received from any other funding source are not allowable

What can the match be made of? It can be cash, or in-kind contribution, or a combination of both. It may not be from another Federal source.

What is meant by In-kind contributions? Where do I find in-kind rates?

In-kind contributions include goods or services provided to meet match requirements rather than money. In-kind contributions must meet the same standard as any other allowable cost item (see allowable costs above). In-kind contributions can only be used to meet the Landowner's match requirements. The value of in-kind contributions represents what the State would have paid for similar services on the open market. Examples of in-kind services include: volunteer time donated to a particular project and the use of donated equipment. See the LIP rates sheet on the website for rates you may include in your budget for in-kind services or equipment. If you do not find the rate in the list, contact the LIP coordinator to establish one.

Can a landowner match more than 25%? Yes, minimum match requires 25%. If you propose to match greater than this amount, the higher your project will rank.

What is the process for receiving reimbursement? You submit reimbursement request form with supporting documentation (invoices from contractors, in-kind tracking sheet or proof of payment to contractor) for both the reimbursable costs AND the match corresponding to the cost-share percent of the project to the LIP Coordinator. This calculation will be based on the total LIP award, not each itemized practice. Your submission will be checked with your original budget and the request will be processed.

How often can you submit for reimbursement? You may request reimbursement whenever and as frequently as you wish. However it is required that provide evidence of their match requirements have been met with each request.

I'm already doing some of things this grant would pay for can I be reimbursed for these activities?

You cannot be reimbursed for actions or work performed prior to the start date of the funded grant period or for work performed after the grant period closes.

If I hire a contractor to do the work will I be reimbursed for his time? Yes, if the work was done during the grant agreement period, the contractor will be paid what we agree to in the proposed budget.

What if the total cost of the project is more than I had in my budget and more than we agreed to in the contract? You will not receive any more money than what you had budgeted. We will reimburse you for what was agreed upon in the contract.

A Condo Assoc. has a management company to mow etc. They have an employee on site can his time be used as match? Yes, his hours can be considered as a match at the rate of which the employee's

regular rate of pay and a reasonable amount of fringe benefits. You can use employees of outside organizations salary as match. However, the employee's time must be necessary and reasonable to accomplish the project objectives, and be directly tied to the project through your grant record keeping. Also, no component of the employee's salary can be from a federal source. You can not use federal funds to match a LIP grant.

WHIP is very similar to LIP, but has a cap of \$2,000 per acre. Does LIP have the same parameters? LIP does not have a cap.

Can you be reimbursed for your own employees? Yes, salaries are an eligible cost given that the cost is incurred within the grant period and the salary is necessary, reasonable, and directly tied to the grant objectives. Overhead and indirect costs will not be reimbursed.

What about volunteer time being used as match? I see that in-kind services are worth \$12.00/hour. What if someone who is working on the project doing technical work donates his time? Volunteer labor time can be used as match. Volunteer labor hours should be quantified at \$12/hour. Volunteer hours must be verifiable and directly applicable to the grant. Keep a tracking sheet of all volunteer hours. The tracking sheet should be signed by the volunteers and landowner. When a professional donates their services, the in-kind rate will be that of the employee's salary. The way it works is that anyone doing regular work that they would normally do for their job can be reimbursed their regular wage and a reasonable amount of fringe benefits.

Will the town give me a tax break if I commit to hold my land in this land use for ten to fifteen years? Probably not.

As an applicant how do I report the money I get from you on my income taxes? LIP is not qualified to give tax advice. We suggest you consult your tax preparer about receiving the grant.

Are pre-grant costs reimbursable? Will I be reimbursed for work that I do in anticipation of receiving a LIP Grant? Specifically, what if you hire a contractor to write the management plan as part of your grant application? No, pre-agreement costs will not be covered under the grant.

When is the earliest an applicant could see any money being reimbursed to them? You can submit a request for reimbursement once work has been accomplished within the funded grant period. Note that the DNR will need to have a completed W-9 in its system before your request can be processed and you will need to submit the required match percentage in order to request reimbursement. You can expect to receive the money within 30 days request approval.

What if someone who is working on the project doing technical work charges more than \$12/hr? If someone is charging you for a service that is an allowable cost, you would be reimbursed for the actual cost incurred at the amount defined in the contract. Direct costs must be built into the budget and agreed upon in the contract before work commences.

Are overhead costs eligible under LIP? No.

Can non-profits use overhead as in-kind? No.

Can monitoring be used as match? Yes, if within grant period and reasonable and applicable to grant. Monitoring should be a minor cost of the grant budget.

What if a federal agency is providing services towards the project – can that be used a match? No.

What about using equipment for match? What about depreciation? The use of equipment itself can be used as match at the defined [hourly rates of use](#). Depreciation may not be factored in.

Compliance / Legal Questions

The RFP states that Landowners are responsible for complying with all state and federal regulations. Could you elaborate on this? It is the Landowner's responsibility to comply with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations. LIP will be able to provide a supportive role; however, it will be up to the landowner to obtain any necessary permits, file cutting plans, or do anything else that may be applicable to their particular project. LIP will not obtain these permits or file plans for the landowner. LIP will assist the landowner by providing advice and/or support; however, it is important for landowners to follow the traditional channels. Worrying about compliance should not prevent a landowner from submitting proposals. All landowners planning on conducting any projects on their land must comply with local, state, and federal laws and regulations regardless of funding source. Compliance is not required just because the landowner is receiving state or federal funding.

How would the landowner know if they are in compliance? There are many local, state, and federal resources available to landowners to determine if their planned activities might conflict with State and Federal laws and regulations. A good place to begin might be with your local town officials or your contractor. There can be variability in town/city requirements. Your local officials or local contractors will likely be familiar with regulations that directly relate to your town. Landowners are also encouraged to seek advice from county or state agencies. Private consultants are another resource available to landowners.

Regarding compliance, the RFP makes specific reference to the Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species act. Will LIP help to conduct these reviews? LIP will conduct these reviews prior to developing your grant agreement. If adjustments to your project are required to remain in compliance, these will be made before the agreement is signed.

What happens if I sell the property? The new landowner is subject to the same requirements of the old landowner. The contract the applicant signs showing their commitment to keep the parcel in the continued land use is filed as an index with the deed. Filing with the Registry of Deeds is the responsibility of the applicant and cost (usually around \$20) cannot be reimbursed. LIP maintains the recorded document in the project file.

Can you explain what happens if we break the terms of the Grant Agreement and are there damages beyond simply repaying the money that I have taken from LIP? If a landowner breaks the Grant Agreement for the practices agreed upon in the management plan, the landowner will not be reimbursed. The landowner may also be required to pay back some or all of the money that they have already received. A pro-rated repayment schedule based on length of time remaining in the grant period is defined in the grant agreement.

What if I break the registered covenant to keep the LIP Project Area in the same land use? The landowner may also be required to pay back some or all of the money that they have received. A pro-rated repayment schedule based on length of time remaining in the grant period is defined in the grant agreement. The agreement is a legal document that will be filed with the Registry of Deeds and runs with the land.

Do these lands have to be open to hunting if we are successful in getting an application approved?
No

Do I have to allow Public Access to receive LIP funding? No.

Do landowners need special insurance to be eligible for LIP? No.