

CPL Program Responses to ML26 Legislative Session

Date: 07/10/2026

To: L-SOHC and Staff

From: David Stein

RE: ML26/FY27 CPL funds only available for Metro Projects

In 2026, the Minnesota 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.)

Since all funds have been specifically 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. This creates a largescale shift in the CPL program's scope and outcomes for FY27. In order to prepare for these changes, this memo will go over the following subjects.

- Updated Outreach Strategies; and
- Implementation strategies for the new legislative guidelines

Outreach Strategies

CPL staff will be changing outreach strategies to focus on the metro area to reflect the change in legislative language. The following strategies will be used to attract interest in the program, and maintain funded application levels:

- ***Statewide Partnership Maintenance:***
CPL staff will work to clearly communicate FY2027 legislative changes to the program to larger statewide partners who regularly apply to the CPL program. Communication will encourage collaboration and partnership between these statewide partners and metro area applicants. This strategy will work to lessen the habitat and financial impacts that these larger statewide partners will feel as a result of this year's change.
- ***Current Metro Partner Coordination:***
CPL staff will communicate with our current metro partners to keep them informed of the changes to the CPL funding for this fiscal year. Additionally, CPL staff will provide guidance regarding the types of projects we will be looking to fund, and encourage current partners to submit multiple applications to address the loss of statewide partners. Specifically, we will encourage highly focused projects on one large site as opposed to previous projects that focused on work across several smaller sites.
- ***New Partner Outreach:***

Despite the loss of statewide participation, several opportunities still exist in the metro for new applicant recruitment. To accomplish this, CPL staff will develop a list of potential new applicants which will include cities, townships, counties, special districts, NGOs, and Tribal governments. This list will be split between CPL staff members, and direct outreach via email and phone communication will introduce the program and the unique funding opportunities available this year. CPL staff will also work to attend meetings of the Metro Conservation Network to increase the visibility of the CPL program among the metro conservation community.

Implementation Strategies

The CPL program is fortunate to have developed a robust set of guidelines and procedures to administer the CPL program. Although the loss of the Traditional and New Applicant rounds will reduce the total amount of applications received, the same procedures will be used to review, award, and administer the FY27 slate of applications. Additionally, the same evaluation criteria will be used to score all applications.

The funding breakdown for FY2027 will be amended to reflect the new legislative priorities, and will be as follows:

- Metro CPL; 2 Rounds: \$11.1 Million
- Expedited Conservation Projects in the Metro (ECPM); 5 Rounds: \$2 Million
- Grant Program Administration: \$600,000

As with previous years, the CPL Request for Proposals will be released, and the CPL Application System will open on August 1st, and will follow the implementation calendar below:

- ***Metro CPL:***
 - August 1, 2026: Request for Proposals published and Application System opens.
- September 15, 2026: Metro Round 1 applications are due by 4:00 pm.
 - October-November 2026: Technical Review Committee Meetings are held.
 - November 2026: Division Director Review Meetings are held.
 - December 2026: Commissioners Office Review Meetings are held.
 - December 30, 2026: Metro Round 1 awards are announced.
 - January 1, 2027: Metro Round 2 opens.
- February 16, 2027: Metro Round 2 applications are due by 4:00 pm.
 - March-April 2027: Technical Review Committee Meetings are held.
 - April 2027: Division Director Review Meetings are held.
 - May 2027: Commissioners Office Review Meetings are held.
 - May 31, 2027: Metro Round 2 awards are announced.
- ***Expedited Conservation Projects in the Metro (ECP):***
 - *Round 1*
 - Application System Opens: August 1, 2026
 - Applications Due: September 7, 2026
 - Awards Announced: October 16, 2026
 - *Round 2*
 - Application System Opens: September 8, 2026

- Applications Due: November 9, 2026
- Awards Announced: December 18, 2026
- *Round 3*
 - Application System Opens: November 10, 2026
 - Applications Due: January 11, 2027
 - Awards Announced: February 19, 2027
- *Round 4*
 - Application System Opens: January 12, 2027
 - Applications Due: March 8, 2027
 - Awards Announced: April 16, 2027
- *Round 5*
 - Application System Opens: March 9, 2027
 - Applications Due: May 10, 2027
 - Awards Announced: June 18, 2027

CPL Procedural Changes

In order to maintain program effectiveness and maintain the trust of our partners, the CPL program will need to re-evaluate rules and procedures, while at the same time maintaining the strict guidelines set to ensure largescale habitat outcomes. The following changes will be implemented:

1. Changes to pre-award match:

Current pre-award match covers costs associated with engineering, design, and biological surveys that were incurred within 18 months of the submission of a CPL application. In FY2027, this will be extended to 36 months to ensure that statewide grantees who were planning to submit an application for FY2027 prior to the legislative changes will still be able to count their work towards future awards. Additionally, biological surveys will be moved from pre-award costs to match.

• Changes to match

New categories will be added to allowable match to fit within the broader L-SOHC guidelines, and to attract new applicants with low cash flow. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Biological surveys on project sites.
- Educational or volunteer event planning expenses.
- Capital equipment under \$10,000.

2. Changes to allowable expenses

New categories will also be added to allowable expenses to fit within broader L-SOHC guidelines, attract new applicants with low cash flow, and to address rising fuel costs. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Travel will be increased from 1% to 3%.
- Interpretive signs*.
- Personnel Cost Increase from 10% to 15%
- Hand tools.
- Personal Protective Equipment

* All interpretive signage must follow established L-SOHC logo guidelines.