



Prairie State Conservation Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

February 2025

What is the Prairie State Conservation Fund?

In 2024, Prairie State Conservation Coalition (PSCC) was awarded a \$47 million grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) to establish a natural areas grant program to support projects and programs intended to preserve or enhance natural habitats and wildlife areas in Illinois. PSCC's new grant-making program is called the Prairie State Conservation Fund (PSCF).

From 1999 to 2024, ICECF awarded grants throughout the state of Illinois to fund projects that advanced renewable energy sources and conserved natural habitat and wildlife areas. At inception, the Trustees of ICECF determined they would spend down their grant-making fund and ultimately ceased operations at the end of 2024. Their final grant was to PSCC.

For historical information on ICECF please visit Illinoiscleanenergy.org.

Will grants awarded through the PSCF be similar to grants that were awarded in the past through the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation?

Yes; however, there will be some differences between the PSCF and ICECF's grant program. More information will be available at a later date.

What types of projects will be funded?

In general, all projects funded through the PSCF must include outcomes that preserve or enhance the natural habitats and wildlife areas of the State of Illinois.

The PSCF will offer grants to eligible applicants for the following types of projects:

- Acquisition of Land or Conservation Easements

- Restoration or Stewardship of Natural Habitats and Wildlife Areas
- Organizational Capacity Building

When will grants be available?

PSCC intends to begin accepting applications for Acquisitions of Land and Conservation Easements in mid-2025.

PSCC plans to open applications for Restoration/Stewardship and Organizational Capacity Building in 2026.

How much funding will be available?

Between \$1.5 and \$2 million will be available for Acquisition of Land or Conservation Easement projects in 2025. The total amount available will vary from year to year.

Will there be a match requirement?

Yes. More information will be available at a later date.

What is the geographic region of the PSCF?

The state of Illinois.

Who is eligible to apply for grants?

For Acquisition of Land and Conservation Easements projects, grant applicants must be either:

- A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; or
- A unit of local government having specific statutory authority to acquire land for public open space purposes (i.e., Forest Preserve Districts, Conservation Districts, Township Open Space Districts, etc.)

For Restoration or Stewardship of Natural Habitats and Wildlife Areas grants, applicants must be 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations.

For Capacity-Building grants, applicants must be 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations that are conservation land trusts or have as their main mission to preserve natural habitats and wildlife areas.

Individuals, for-profit entities, and other types of local government are not eligible to apply.

Does my organization have to be a PSCC member to apply for a grant?

No.

If I serve on the PSCC Board of Directors, can an organization with which I'm affiliated apply for a grant?

Yes.

How will grant applications be reviewed and approved?

Grant applications will be accepted and undergo initial review and evaluation by PSCC grant staff for accuracy, completion, and eligibility.

Next, the Grant Committee will review grant applications, deliberate, and approve grant awards.

Finally, the PSCC Board will ratify all grant funding awards approved by the Grant Committee. To avoid any conflict of interest, PSCC Board members who represent an organization with a grant application being voted on will recuse themselves and leave the meeting.

Who will sit on the Grant Committee?

Voting members of the Grant Committee will be non-PSCC Board Members that have knowledge and experience with the types of projects that will be funded.

Why use an independent Grant Committee?

A transparent structure and process is necessary due to the make-up of the PSCC Board of Directors as potential grant recipients.

Since ICECF no longer exists, who does PSCC report to regarding its grant awarded from ICECF?

Pursuant to the grant agreement between ICECF and PSCC, an Independent Monitor has been put into place to ensure compliance with the grant agreement.

Program specific criteria and additional FAQ pages will be provided at a later date