

**Initial Screening Criteria and Prioritization for Grant Submittals
Involving the Acquisition of Interests in Land.
State of Alaska
Department of Fish and Game & Department of Natural Resources**

DNR and ADF&G receive a number of requests each year to submit grant applications interests in land under various Federal grant programs. While project objectives and requirements may vary according to the funding source, there are requirements common to the State and the Office of Federal Assistance.

There is a significant workload associated with submitting and processing grant applications for both agencies and proposers, typically non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as land trusts. In an effort to streamline this process and reduce the workload for all concerned, DNR and ADF&G have adopted initial screening criteria and a prioritization that will be applied to all grant proposals involving land acquisition in order to maximize state and private sector resources. In addition, a revised proposal submissions process has been developed to help ensure that viable proposals are submitted in a format and timeline acceptable to the State.

Addressing initial screening criteria early in the process and committing to a revised submittal process will focus agency and non-agency support for proposals and result in Alaska having more competitive proposals at the national level and allow the agencies to work more effectively through the legislative approval process.

In writing a proposal involving the acquisition of land, the proposer should consult the following white papers:

- Applying for a Grant Involving the Acquisition of Land or an Interest in Land: What you Should Know (<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/commis/reclands.htm>)
- Acquiring an Interest in Land on Behalf of the State (<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/commis/reclands.htm>)

It is strongly recommended that a proposer consider the costs to the State and the proposer's organization of working through the land acquisition process, the time required to complete the process, and any long-term costs associated with the interest to be acquired as a proposed budget and timeline are developed.

INITIAL SCREENING CRITERIA FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

1. Will the proposed project meet state or local government needs or serve a public purpose? Some needs are identified in planning documents such as the State's Assessment of Need (Forest Legacy Program), the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and other state, municipal or city planning documents. Other needs may be identified by a Department or a Division in other documents or informally.
2. Is the proposed project located in or adjacent to a Legislatively Designated Area (LDA) or an area that is manageable by the State or local government entity?
3. Is the proposed project free of encumbrances and liabilities? Provide a preliminary commitment for title insurance to document the answer. If encumbrances or liabilities are identified, can they be resolved prior to closing?
4. Is the proposed project area or parcel legally described?

5. Are there any known hazardous materials or contamination issues?
6. What public purpose does the project serve? It is expected that the greater public will benefit from the acquisition (such as economic, recreational, public access, habitat, etc.).
7. Who will hold title? If title is to vest in an entity other than the State, the recipient of title must provide the State with full indemnification for the project. The State is liable for the appropriate use of these parcels in perpetuity. Should the parcels acquired not be managed consistent with the terms of the grant or funding source, the state may be liable for payment to the granting agency. Therefore, the State will require that a conservation easement provide full indemnification for the State and there must be an agency or division willing to hold that easement.
8. Is adequate match documented in writing as required by the funding source?
9. Is broader support for the proposed project documented in writing (for example, political, community or interest group support)?
10. Is there a willing seller? Provide a letter signed by the landowner(s) describing their interest in the project and their expectations regarding the project such as a description of bundle of rights that are for sale, any conditions of sale, valuation of interest, and timeline.

PRIORITIZATION

Threat:

1. Is the area identified in the proposed project threatened?
2. How immediate is the threat and is the threat real?

Importance:

3. How important are the public benefits associated with this project?
 - a. Access, recreation
 - b. Economic
 - c. Environmental
 - d. Social, cultural
 - e. Management

Strategic:

4. Is the project located in or adjacent to an LDA or locally designated area?
5. Is the project manageable?
6. Is the project accessible?

Readiness:

7. How complex is the proposal? Are there multiple parcels, multiple landowners, boundary questions, erosion or accretion issues? Subsurface ownership?
8. Is there an acceptable legal description?
9. Is there a preliminary commitment for title insurance?
10. Have any other due diligence tasks been completed?
11. Have funds been dedicated for this specific purpose (e.g. legislation, mitigation)?

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. To ensure the State's ability to work effectively with an organization, we request that in February of the calendar year in which an individual or organization plans to submit a proposal, proposers schedule a meeting with the grant administrator or program manager

for the grant program to which the project is directed. The grant administrator will pull together the appropriate agency staff to discuss the proposal. Staff may attend from Department of Law, Realty Services, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, DNR Commissioner's Office and Department of Fish and Game. Bring as much information as possible to this meeting. The following information is the minimum expected:

- a. Preliminary commitment for title insurance with supporting documentation (cost \$250)
 - b. Legal description
 - c. Maps of the parcel or project area. Plats.
 - d. A description of the attributes of the project and the parcel.
2. The State will review the results of this meeting and the information provided and contact the proposer within 30 days to discuss the status of the proposal. The initial screening criteria and prioritization described above will be applied to the conceptual proposal. The objective of this initial meeting and screening process is to identify deficiencies in the proposal, identify possible remedies, and make an assessment of the general readiness of the proposed project and the level of state support for the proposal.
3. All project proposals are due to the agency not less than 30 days prior to the federal grant submittal deadline.