



Illinois Clean Energy

community foundation

Land Acquisition

Funding Guidelines

What does “important natural area” mean to the Foundation?

The Foundation does not have its own definition of quality for Illinois natural areas. The Foundation has awarded grants to support projects such as the update of the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) to inventory and characterize the relative natural condition of sites. Provided the guidelines are met and the major components of any two acquisition projects are similar, the Foundation gives preference to sites that protect or buffer INAI sites. In addition to the natural condition of the to-be-acquired site, the Foundation looks to see whether the parcel is listed as a priority for preservation by a collaborative natural resource conservation planning process.

- [Illinois Natural Areas Inventory \(INAI\)](#)

Is there an example of a "collaborative natural resource conservation planning process," for the purposes of meeting the Foundation's criteria for funding natural areas land acquisition grants?

Yes. One state-level plan is the Illinois State Wildlife Action Plan, which identifies 31 Conservation Opportunity Areas. The parcel you seek to protect does not have to be highlighted in a state-level plan. It could be listed in a bi-county greenways plan, for example.

- [Illinois State Wildlife Action](#)

Does the Foundation support multiple-year projects under the Land Acquisition Funding Category?

Most successful Land Acquisition proposals are awarded 12-month grants, with the final report due to the Foundation two months after the end of the grant period. The Foundation is open to considering requests for projects with a duration of 18 months provided that the applicant submits a detailed plan of work that is likely to be accomplished within the proposed time frame. Projects which are allowed a longer time frame are typically acquiring more than one parcel (see next question).

Does the Foundation support the acquisition of multiple parcels with one grant award?

Sometimes. And only if they are connected to the same natural resource targeted for protection, and the grant project timeline is **no more than 18 months.**

Examples are projects seeking to protect a group of natural areas to create a greenway along a river or projects protecting different parcels both adjoining to, but on two different sides of a forest preserve. The Foundation will consider a limited number of Land Acquisition awards at the level of \$1 million or greater. To be considered for support at this level, a proposed multiple-parcel land protection project should purchase at least one parcel of 40 acres or greater and directly expand at least one previously protected natural area of 40 acres or greater.

Is there a minimum acreage requirement for Land Acquisition projects?

Yes. The Foundation will only consider projects that acquire sites that are **40 acres or greater.**

Do I need to have a willing seller before submitting a Land Acquisition Application?

Yes. And it is preferable that you have an agreed upon price set by a signed contract or purchase agreement. The Foundation may be open to multiple-parcel requests which involve acquisitions at various stages of negotiations. If you are working to protect a series of connected parcels, please call or e-mail the Foundation at (312) 372-5191 or naturalareas@illinoiscleanenergy.org to discuss the status of your negotiations and the timing of submitting a possible grant request for a multiple-parcel project.

Do I need to commission an appraisal before submitting an application?

No. An appraisal will be required before any payments will be made under a grant and the appraisal cannot be more that 1 year old at the time of closing. The Foundation may be open to multiple-parcel requests which involve acquisitions at various stages of negotiations. If you are working to protect a series of connected parcels, please call or e-mail the Foundation at (312) 372-5191 or naturalareas@illinoiscleanenergy.org to discuss the status of your negotiations and the timing of submitting a possible grant request for a multiple-parcel project.