



Request for Proposals Research on the Benefits, Challenges, and Implications of Land-Based Mitigation Strategies

Summary

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy invites proposals for original research that examines the challenges and implications of land-based climate mitigation responses in the interest of developing more effective and equitable climate responses. The geographic focus of this RFP is global, with particular interest in proposals from a developing country context. Proposals will be reviewed competitively according to the weighted evaluation criteria indicated below. The output is expected to be a document that could become a Lincoln Institute working paper appropriate for publication.

Context

The climate change discourse increasingly includes prospective land-related measures as a central part of societal responses to climate change. Whether under the name of nature-based solutions (NbS), net negative emissions, renewable energy resources, tree planting, etc., the frequently envisioned scale of land-based mitigation strategies is truly staggering; that's especially true given the anticipated reliance on land that is arable or otherwise important from the standpoint of wildlife habitat, biodiversity, or protecting freshwater resources, and the worrisome global land speculation that is already emerging. Thus, land-use planning and land policy must increasingly consider climate change in terms of climate impacts *and* societal responses to climate change. In this context, we consider land-based mitigation measures to be any climate mitigation strategy that requires large amounts of land, including bioenergy, afforestation, and the siting of large-scale renewables such as solar. Effective land-use planning and land policymaking require collaboration with stakeholders and impacted communities. Moreover, it will require attention to direct and indirect actors and systems of governance.

Climate-land interactions involve an array of relevant institutions and regimes that span and overlap jurisdictions from the local to the global. Climate change impacts on natural systems are far-reaching and both direct and indirect. The often complex and nonlinear ways hydrological systems or biodiversity will be affected threaten critical ecosystem services on which our social systems depend. Social systems not only depend on ecosystem goods and services but are fundamentally arranged among global flows of food, fuel, fiber, and waste, meaning that any climate-related disruptions will potentially have cascading effects on social arrangements worldwide. Consequently, land plays a central role in safeguarding and preserving fundamental human rights (i.e., food security, water security, access to livelihoods, security, and avoidance of conflict, etc.). The distributional consequences of these shifts in society's interrelations with land are potentially enormous. While some groups find ways to thrive and profit, others may slip into even more precarious and marginalized conditions. We call these the "pitfalls of land-based mitigation."

Research Themes

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy invites research proposals that expand upon the four themes outlined below. Proposals may address more than one theme.

Theme 1: Translate Lessons from Closely Related Fields

Past large-scale land-based interventions and extractive industries, such as wildlife conservation, large dams, and mining, demonstrate that policies and programs often fail to consider local contexts and can amplify existing international and domestic power disparities. However, these past interventions and industries have been examined and analyzed extensively from diverse academic disciplines, including rural sociology, development economics, anthropology, and geography. These disciplines have generated lessons, analytical framings, and policy recommendations that can also apply to the emerging field of land-based climate mitigation. This research theme aims to take the knowledge, history, and policy recommendations from existing research of analogous societal undertakings and translate them into our current effort to minimize the pitfalls of land-based mitigation. Through the documentation and analysis of these, the research should identify lessons and propose recommendations that could be implemented in the land-based mitigation space.

Theme 2: Emerging High-Level Policy Frameworks and Their Implications for Land-Based Mitigation

Policy decisions that drive the financing and implementation of land-based mitigation occur at a very high level, largely removed from any local context. Ongoing negotiations and decision-making processes are creating frameworks that establish expectations, objectives, and rules for defining and undertaking land-based mitigation activities. Such frameworks, which include voluntary carbon markets, Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, net-zero pledges, and nationally determined contributions (NDCs), have implications for how, where, at what scale, and by whom land-based mitigation is implemented and its potential consequences. This research theme aims to analyze these frameworks, including the context in which policies and decisions are made, to understand how they are evolving and to identify the emerging policy implications. Potential policy implications could relate to emerging national and subnational legislation and regulations on carbon markets, land tenure reforms, or new participatory processes that include local and Indigenous communities in decision-making, among many others.

Theme 3: Understanding Current Trends

Even as international and national policy frameworks are still in development, momentum is building around land-based mitigation strategies, particularly afforestation and reforestation driven by carbon credit markets, resulting in developments on the ground, ranging from proposals to implementation. Land-based mitigation objectives directly drive these projects, agreements, and proposals occurring at large scales. This research theme seeks to identify and examine such developments, including their challenges, benefits, and implications for local communities, and extract lessons and insights to guide future work.

Theme 4: Evaluating Alternatives to Carbon as a Commodity

Several alternative approaches to land-based mitigation have been offered that are less carbon-centric; that is, they more wholly recognize the wider benefits and demands on land. Among these are alternative agricultural systems (agroecology, regenerative agriculture, etc.), conservation methods

(ecosystem restoration, mosaic restoration, pro-forestation), and rights-based approaches (Indigenous and community-based land stewardship), all of which have, to some extent, been experimented with, providing an evidence base of their potential benefits and challenges. The focus of this research theme is to review these alternative approaches, assess them, and compare them to other methods that are emerging. Results from this research theme should help identify viable land-use policies to support effective and equitable land-based mitigation strategies within an earth systems governance framework.

Expected Cost

Awards for selected proposals will depend on the scope of the work, deliverable types, and the justification of the proposed budget. Similar project funding has ranged from \$12,000 to \$40,000, but these should not be considered limits for applicants who want to submit proposals below or above this range. Award recipients must complete the proposed project within one year of selection, although projects may be completed in less time. The Lincoln Institute cannot guarantee final payments for projects submitted after the final deadline.

Evaluation Criteria

The Lincoln Institute will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

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| Relevance to at least one research theme identified in the RFP guidelines related to the benefits, challenges, and implications of land-based mitigation strategies. | 35% |
| Quality of the proposed methodology and sources of data. | 25% |
| Qualifications of the members of the research team. | 25% |
| Feasibility of project completion within the stated timeline and budget justification. | 15% |
| Total Score | 100% |

Application Guidelines

This RFP is open to any individual or agency, practitioner, or academic interested in helping the institute expand its knowledge and resources on this topic. Submissions will be accepted from research teams; however, a principal investigator must be identified. The Lincoln Institute welcomes international applicants.

The proposal should clearly indicate the purpose and objectives of the research, highlighting the primary research theme(s) it will address. Proposals that do not clearly articulate an identifiable and coherent research question that advances at least one of the four research themes will not be considered. Proposals should highlight and document the contribution the project is likely to make to the literature and/or policy debates related to the topic.

Submit the entire application using [this form](#) by April 18, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Submissions

Proposals must be submitted online via the web-based application form and must follow the guidelines that appear in the appendix of this RFP. Proposals submitted by email or mail will not be accepted. Incomplete proposals, proposals received after the due date, or proposals that do not respect the format defined in the guidelines will not be accepted.

Proposals must be submitted in English. The final work produced pursuant to the RFP (if selected for an award) must be in English.

Deliverable Types

Proposals may include more than one deliverable. At least one of the deliverables must be a document (or manuscript) that could become a Lincoln Institute working paper, but proposals may include additional deliverable types for consideration upon selection (e.g., other media types, maps, or toolkits). Manuscripts that could be considered for working papers must adhere to the Lincoln Institute's format and style. The selected proposals will receive the format and style guide during the contracting process. However, upon request, we can send the format and style guide to proposal authors during the application period.

Publication and Dissemination

The Lincoln Institute is not required to publish the resulting product. Exceptional papers will be considered for inclusion in the Lincoln Institute working paper series. Individuals selected through the RFP may also be invited to present completed projects through webinars, conferences, and other Lincoln Institute events.

Ownership and Third-Party Copyrights

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy will own all work products in all forms, including print or electronic, eBooks, the Web, and social media, together with all rights, titles, and interests therein, including copyrights. The Lincoln Institute's ownership and copyright conditions do not preclude the publication of commissioned works in other journals or media. Works commissioned by the Lincoln Institute may be published by a third party (journal, publishing house), but only after securing the permission of the Lincoln Institute.

RFP Schedule

Please note that the dates listed below are subject to change.

- Application deadline: April 18, 2024
- Notification of accepted proposals: May 2, 2024
- First progress report¹: June 30, 2024
- Second progress report: October 17, 2024
- First draft: December 20, 2024
- Final deliverable(s): May 1, 2025

Confidentiality

The information presented in the selection process and responses should be treated as confidential by the institute and the representatives involved in responding. This information is not to be distributed to any parties except those in the institute or those involved in responding to the RFP within the organization invited to respond. Similarly, the institute will not share the contents of any one responder with any of the other responders and will treat the RFP response documents as confidential.

Questions About this RFP

For questions regarding this request for proposals, please send an email to Madeline Hiller, program assistant, at mhiller@lincolnst.edu.

¹ We recognize the early timing of this deliverable. The first progress report is intended to show initial advancements and share early project updates, such as data collection or engagement plans. We do not expect it to contain significant findings.

About the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy seeks to improve quality of life through the effective use, taxation, and stewardship of land. A nonprofit private operating foundation whose origins date to 1946, the Lincoln Institute researches and recommends creative approaches to land as a solution to economic, social, and environmental challenges. Through education, training, publications, and events, we integrate theory and practice to inform public policy decisions worldwide.

APPENDIX A: FORMATTING GUIDELINES FOR RFP PROPOSALS

1. **Language:** Proposals must be submitted in English. The final work produced pursuant to the RFP (if selected for an award) must be in English.
2. **Proposal Abstract:** The abstract is fundamental in the assessment of proposals. We encourage all applicants to submit proposals with well-written, clear, and compelling abstracts that do not exceed 1,500 characters in length. The proposal abstract must convey the core issue(s) and proposed contribution of the research project for which funding is sought. It should clearly convey the project description, purpose, relevance, and data sources of the proposed research. Proposals with poorly written or vague abstracts may not pass the first stage of review.
3. **Contact Information and Curriculum Vitae:** Please include a proposed title for the research project and contact information for the lead author and other contributors in the project (include name, title, organization, email, coauthors, or research collaborators' information). All correspondence from the Lincoln Institute will be made with the lead author. Please include curriculum vitae/resume(s) and records of publications (three pages maximum per person).
4. **Detailed Budget:** Please outline the costs for research assistance, data collection, fieldwork, travel, etc., and attach the budget to the proposal form. Projects that have other sources of financing or will need co-financing should state the expected amount, the sources of co-financing, and any conditions attached to such financing. **The Lincoln Institute allows up to 15% overhead.**
5. **Calendar of Activities:** Attach to the proposal form a draft of a work plan with a projected schedule of activities to be completed. Please ensure the calendar lines up with the RFP Schedule described earlier in this document.
6. **Project Description:** The project description should not exceed 10,000 characters in length. It should identify the following:
 - **Objective and specific research question(s):** Clearly state the purpose and objectives of the research, highlighting the main question(s) and theme(s) to be addressed. Proposals without an identifiable and coherent research question will not be considered. Specify the relevance of the proposal to the priority issues listed in this RFP. Highlight and document the contribution your proposal is likely to make to the literature and/or policy debates related to the topic.
 - **Theoretical or conceptual framework and main hypotheses to be tested:** Give the conceptual framework that informs the research. List and discuss a maximum of

three key works that help situate the proposal clearly and easily within the relevant academic and policy literature. Describe the subject of comparison and how it relates to the theoretical or conceptual framework and hypothesis.

- **Methodology, sources of empirical data, and data collection strategy:** Clearly present the analytical methods to be used and their relationship to the conceptual framework adopted for the research. Specify sources of empirical data, assurance of access to the data, data collection strategy (when warranted), and proposed uses of data to generate and support desired results, if any.
- **Expected outcomes:** Identify and explain the expected outcome(s) of the research and its relevance for policy and knowledge production. What results are expected, why would they be relevant, and how would they be disseminated and used?
- **Description of roles and partnerships:** If research involves collaboration with academic institutions, government organizations, the private sector, etc., please specify the role of each participant on the project team, including the responsibilities and tasks assigned to the lead author and to each collaborator.

APPENDIX B: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Proposal Format

- **How detailed should the project description be?** Whatever best conveys the topic(s) and objective of your proposal in clear language. The project description should not exceed 10,000 characters in length.
- **Should the project description include a budget?** No. The online application contains a separate section to upload the budget.
- **How flexible is the character count for each section?** You must adhere to the specified character count, or your proposal will not be accepted.
- **What is the format for a Lincoln Institute publication?** The authors of selected proposals will be sent formatting guidelines and a template for Lincoln Institute working papers.
- **Are references included in the character count within the project description section?** Yes.

Budget

- **Can the budget be changed during the research?** No, except in the case of reallocation of funds in consultation with the Lincoln Institute.
- **Does the Lincoln Institute cover institutional overhead?** Yes, the Lincoln Institute covers **up to 15%** overhead.
- **What does the award amount cover?** The award covers all direct research expenditures including personnel, research assistance, data, interviews, books, research-related travel and software, or other items deemed indispensable for the project's development.
- **Does the Lincoln Institute finance acquisition of equipment?** No.
- **Is there a maximum budget amount?** No. Total funding from the Lincoln Institute will be determined based on the scope of the project and the justification of the proposed budget.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Do I need to be a US citizen to apply?** No.
- **Do you fund only academics? What about practitioners and researchers who do not hold a master's degree or a PhD?** The RFP targets, but is not restricted to, academics and researchers holding an advanced degree.
- **Can the paper be coauthored?** Yes. Contact details for all authors must be mentioned in the proposal and a lead author must be designated as the person responsible for the project.
- **How many proposals do you expect to receive?** The average number of responses to other Lincoln Institute RFPs ranges from 20 to 200.

- **Can I get feedback on the substance of my proposal?** No. This is a competitive process, so all participants must have access to the same information. Thus, we will not respond to individual consultations during the evaluation period or prior to the proposal due date.
- **Can I make changes to a section of my proposal after I send it in?** Only if you do so before the final date for submission of proposals and only if you submit a complete revised version that will replace the original one. You must notify the Lincoln Institute if you wish to submit a new proposal so that we can ensure the original one is discarded.
- **Can I submit more than one research proposal?** Yes, you may submit multiple proposals, but they must be submitted separately.

If you have further questions regarding these guidelines, please send an email to mhillier@lincolninst.edu.