



**Excellence · Trust · Permanence**

*The Commission awards the accreditation seal to land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.*

# Are You Ready?

## Take our quiz to see if accreditation is right for your land trust

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. Applicants for accreditation must demonstrate compliance with all of the accreditation indicator practices. The following checklist is a guide to see if your organization is eligible and ready to apply for accreditation. Check all that apply to your land trust.

### **Part 1: Are these statements true for your land trust?**

- We are committed to continuous improvement and building a strong land trust.
- We are committed to the long-term stewardship of the land and/or the conservation easements we hold.
- We are committed to upholding the credibility of the land trust community.

### **Part 2: Is your land trust eligible?**

- Are you a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) tax-exempt or quasi-governmental organization?
- Have you been incorporated for at least two years?
- Are you focused on acquiring and/or stewarding conservation land or conservation easements?
- Have you completed at least two direct land or easement acquisition projects? (In a direct land or easement acquisition project the applicant organization is included in the chain of title on a fee parcel or is the grantee of a conservation easement.)

*If your land trust does not meet these criteria, it is not eligible for accreditation at this time.*

### **Part 3: Does your land trust adhere to best practices?**

- Have you adopted *Land Trust Standards and Practices* (2004)?
- Have you conducted an assessment against the full *Land Trust Standards and Practices*?

*Adoption of Land Trust Standards and Practices and completion of an assessment within three years prior to applying for accreditation are required.*

### **Part 4: Do you think your land trust is ready to apply?**

- Are you implementing the indicator practices? *Accredited land trusts must carry out each of the accreditation indicator practices. Conducting an assessment against Land Trust Standards and Practices and reviewing the application are helpful to evaluate implementation.*
- Do you have the necessary documentation? *Applicants must provide evidence that they are carrying out each of the indicator practices. If your organization recently adopted new policies, your application must include evidence that the policies are being implemented.*

- Can you show how your organization reviews and approves land transactions?  
*Do you have evidence of how land transactions are reviewed and approved in your organization? Do you have a paper trail for land projects that shows that transactions are screened against criteria and are carefully planned and that stewardship obligations can be met? Can you provide the information your board receives before it makes a decision to acquire land or conservation easements?*

- Do you have a written records policy and are duplicate copies of essential records stored in a separate location?  
*Applicants must have a records policy and must keep originals of all irreplaceable documents essential to the defense of each land transaction in one location and copies in a separate location. Original documents must also be protected from daily use and be secure from fire, floods and other damage.*

- Can you demonstrate how you will pay for long-term stewardship and defense costs?  
*Applicants must show they have determined their stewardship and defense obligations and are securing the funds to meet them.*

- If you hold conservation easements, do you have baseline documentation (or current condition) reports for all and do you monitor them annually?  
*Applicants must have a baseline documentation report for every conservation easement they hold. They must demonstrate a pattern of monitoring each easement annually. The Commission will look for a minimum of two consecutive years of annual monitoring records to show compliance.*

- If you own land in fee, do you have management plans or summaries for each property and do you inspect your properties regularly?  
*Applicants must have a written management plan or summary for each property they hold in fee and show that these properties are inspected regularly.*

### **Part 5: Is this the right time?**

- Do you have a team of people who can dedicate the time to complete the application?
- Can you schedule a time when your land trust is not involved in a complex land transaction or other event or activity for the team to focus on the application?

### **Test Yourself!**

Read the application for accreditation and accompanying *Applicant Handbook* thoroughly to see if your organization is ready to apply. Both publications are available online at [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org).

### **Need More Preparation?**

If your land trust is not yet able to answer 'yes' to the questions above or to complete the application for accreditation, visit the Land Trust Alliance's website – [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org) – for resources and training that may be available to help you prepare for accreditation.

In addition to the application and *Applicant Handbook*, the Commission has other resources available on its website, including advice from applicants and *Guidance Documents* on specific practices (available January 2008). Visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org) for these and other Commission resources.

*For more information, contact the Commission at 518-587-3143 or [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org).*