



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.*

# Getting Started

## Beginning your land trust's journey to accreditation

### Why Accreditation, Why Now

Accreditation is a mark of distinction in land conservation. The accreditation seal provides the public with an assurance that the accredited organization meets national quality standards and has the systems in place to protect important natural places and working lands forever.

Accreditation recognizes the hard work that goes into consistently implementing [Land Trust Standards and Practices](#). Reaching the point of being ready to apply for accreditation is a milestone for any land trust.

The land trusts that have achieved accreditation say the process is challenging, but a smart investment. They say that they are stronger and more efficient, have improved the confidence of landowners and funders, gained recognition from their communities and ensured the long-term success of their organizations.

### Phase I: Conduct an Assessment

A first step in implementing [Land Trust Standards and Practices](#) and eventually applying for accreditation is conducting the required [assessment](#) against the full set of standards. It helps to be frank and honest in the assessment. Implementing an action plan that charts a course to the improvements identified by the assessment is essential.

### Phase II: Test Yourself with the Checklists

When the improvements identified in the assessment are complete and/or your land trust thinks it can demonstrate compliance with the accreditation indicator practices,

test this assumption with a careful review of the [Master Attachment Checklist](#) and [Project Documentation Checklist](#). Read each indicator practice and the lists of required documentation you will be asked to submit. Identify if each document exists, where it is, and if it is of sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance. Most groups who go through this the first time find gaps. The next step is to develop and implement a plan to fill those gaps.

### Phase III: Put Your Application Team Together and Register to Apply!

When an organization can demonstrate that it is meeting the practices, it should begin the process by [registering to apply](#). Next you can put together the accreditation team and start pulling all the materials together!

If you are ready to apply, the [Applicant Handbook](#) is a must-read. It provides detailed information on the program requirements and application process. If your organization needs assistance with assessments or information on how to implement the indicator practices, the Land Trust Alliance's online tool, [The Learning Center](#), is a good place to start.

The Commission also hosts [free webinars](#) throughout the year on the accreditation process and makes those presentations available for download on our website, [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org).

Wherever your land trust is on its journey, we wish you success. Please contact us if you have questions about the accreditation program.