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In Depth: Pre-Application for Land Trust Accreditation

Note that the script for this webinar is at the end of the PowerPoint presentation.

Webinar Outline

- ✓ Registration and Eligibility (briefly)
- ✓ Pre-Application Questionnaire and Required Attachments
- ✓ Submitting A Pre-Application
- ✓ Pre-Application Review and Project Selection
- ✓ Notification of Acceptance
- ✓ Public Notice Begins
- ✓ Additional Resources

Registration

- Registration still open for 2009
- You can register at www.landtrustaccreditation.org
- Complete form and pay registration fee
- Registration will be modified August 4, 2009, and open new rounds for 2010
- Poll

Eligibility

- Land conservation mission *(question 4)*
- 2 years / 2 projects *(question 5)*
- Adopted *Land Trust Standards and Practices (question 12)*
- Assessment within last 3 years *(question 13)*
- 501(c)(3) or quasi-governmental *(question 14)*

Pre-Application

- Six Sections:
  - Pre-application Questionnaire
  - Form 990
  - Audited Financials
  - Documentation of an Assessment
  - Land Conservation Project List
  - Map

Straightforward Questions:

3. Documentation Necessary for Accreditation
4. Organization Description
6. Demographics
7. Board of Directors
8. Staff and Volunteers
9. Members/Financial Supporters

Pre-Application Questionnaire

Straightforward Questions:

16. Professional Memberships
17. Conflicts of Interest – Review Team Assignments
18. *Applicant Handbook*
19. Accreditation Team

1. Organization Name and Contact Information

- Pretty straightforward
- Selection of accreditation primary contact important!
  - Available
  - Computer literate
- Include street address in addition to P.O. Box, if applicable

2. Related Organizations

If your organization has more than one corporation, governing authority or related entity that is legally-linked to it:

- Describe it in the pre-application as requested
- Contact the Commission to discuss

5. Protected Land

Information required, as applicable, for number and acres of easements and fee properties:

- currently held by your organization
- once held by your organization and transferred to another organization or agency
- that your organization protected in other ways

Note:

- *The numbers for your current holdings should match your land conservation project list (or should be explained), and,*
- Must have baseline documentation reports for every easement (or will at time of application),
- Must be able to demonstrate two consecutive years of documented annual monitoring (or will at time of application),
- Must have management plans or summaries for all fee properties (or will at time of application).
- Read *Guidance Documents*!

10. Financial Overview

- The budget amount should reflect the overall organizational budget, even if land conservation is only a part of what your organization does
- If your organization is an independent subsidiary or otherwise legally linked to another entity, then enter your organization’s budget here and include information on the related organization in question 2.

11. Reserve and/or Dedicated Funds

Fund Type *as of m/d/yy*	**Amount**	**Description**	**Restrictions**
Operating reserve	$		Select One
Operating endowment	$		Select One
Land acquisition	$		Select One
Conservation easement monitoring and stewardship *(if combined with defense, skip to *)*	$		Select One
Conservation easement legal defense *(if combined with monitoring and stewardship, skip to *)*	$		Select One
Fee land management and stewardship *(if combined with easement monitoring and stewardship, skip to *)*	$		Select One
* Combined monitoring, stewardship and legal defense fund	$		Select One
Other, please describe	$		Select One

15. Dates of Policy Adoption

Required written policies:

- 3F. Delegation of Transaction Approval Policy (if applicable)
- 4A. Conflict of Interest Policy
- 6F. Investment Policy
- 9G. Records Policy pursuant to practice 2D
- 11E. Conservation Easement Enforcement Policy
- 11I. Conservation Easement Amendment Policy

Applicants for accreditation must have adopted all of these policies at time of application and be able to document implementation as applicable.

Required Attachments

1. **Most recent Form 990** (or Form 990-EZ) and, *if applicable*, most recent Form 990T.
2. **Audited financial statement** for the financial period covered by the most recent Form 990, **and for the year prior.**

3. Document completion of an assessment against the full *Land Trust Standards and Practices* within the last three years

- Completed ***AYO*** summary pages 18 and 37
- Board retreat agenda and notes
- Meeting minutes showing discussion of results

Note: If your organization did not use AYO, provide:

– a copy of the completed assessment tool

– a cover page to the assessment results that identifies how the assessment addressed each of the practices in *Land Trust Standards and Practices*.

4. Land Conservation Project List(s)

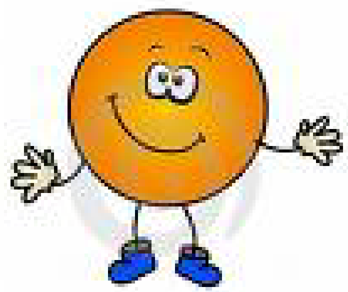
- Electronic copy using Commission Excel template preferred
- One list for easements, one for fee
- Cut-off date close to pre-app due date
- List each easement separately
- May list fee properties by preserve or project
- Double check data

5. **Map *(hard copy required)***
   - Only attachment required as a hard-copy
   - Provides an overview of conservation work
   - Should show approx. location of fee lands and easements
   - Should be relatively recent
   - Can be in a format convenient for you but no smaller than 8 ½ x 11

Submitting A Pre-Application

- Must be in Commission office on or before due date *(may be submitted up to one month in advance)*
- Must be sent together in one package
- Electronic format (on CD or DVD) preferred for all but map *(may also provide hard copy)*

Now What?



Pre-Application Review and Project Selection

The Commission will review each pre-application to determine:

- Is organization eligible?
- Are documents provided complete?
- Does it need to complete additional monitoring visits or baselines to document compliance by the time of application?

Pre-Application Review and Project Selection

The Commission will also complete project selection:

- 2-6 projects selected
- Project documentation checklist
- Newer projects, current practice
- Older projects, stewardship focus

Notification of Acceptance

- Within 5 weeks of application due date
- Electronic notification
- Includes list of projects selected
- Includes identification of areas that need addressing in complete application

Public Notice Begins

- Organization should begin notification of stakeholders, both internal and external
- See pages 27-30 and pages 43-44 of the *Applicant Handbook* for complete details

Additional Resources

Commission:

- Webinar on the application process
- *Applicant Handbook*
- Application Materials
- Fact sheets
- *Guidance Documents*

Additional Resources

Land Trust Alliance:

- The Learning Center: http://learningcenter.lta.org
- *Standards and Practices Guidebook*
- Standards and Practices Curriculum
- Training, conferences, online learning and webinars

Questions?

Thank you!

Script for In Depth: Pre-Application Webinar

June 18, 2009

Slide 1 Introduction

Welcome! My name is Jennifer Brady-Connor. I'm the Program Coordinator here at the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and I want to welcome you to our webinar, "In Depth: Pre-Application for Land Trust Accreditation."

Before we get started, I want to go over a few housekeeping details:

- I have muted all lines except my own, and will unmute at the end of the presentation.
- You may want to log out of other applications running (email, Word, etc.)
- The webinar session works best in Internet Explorer or Firefox. You may want to log out of other internet browsers and return in Explorer. We'll be still be here.
- If you have internet access and are entering the link correctly but are still having problems logging into the presentation, please contact the emergency technical support at 714-890-3008

I'm the Program Coordinator at the Commission. What that means to you is that I am the front-line to answering your questions about the overall application and review process, and I also process every pre-application and application that comes through the door before passing the information on to other staff, who then select projects and review applications. So I should be able to answer most if not all of your questions regarding the pre-application and pre-application process.

Slide 2 Webinar Outline

Now let's go over what we are going to talk about today. This is an in-depth review of the pre-application for accreditation. It's designed for people who are familiar with accreditation and are registered for or are getting ready to register for an application round for 2009 or 2010. You may or may not have yet read the *Applicant Handbook*, which I will reference during the presentation. After this webinar, the PowerPoint presentation will be posted to the Commission's website in the webinar section.

Slide 3 Registration

Registration is an electronic process available on the Commission's website that allows an organization to secure its slot in an application round. Registration is the first step in the application process. Registering also ensures that a prospective applicant receives timely and relevant correspondence for its application round.

Slide 4 Eligibility

Please be sure your organization is eligible to apply for accreditation before registering.
[BRIEFLY REVIEW CONTENT OF SLIDE]
I have indicated the questions on the pre-application that assist the Commission in determining eligibility.

Slide 5 Pre-Application

The pre-application consists of six sections, listed below. We'll go into each of these in detail in a moment.

Pre-applications are screened to make sure that the organization meets the eligibility requirements and to highlight any items that might be of issue in the application. (Such as indicating if there are monitoring problems that will need to be addressed or if the land trust will have to submit a plan for stewardship funding.)

The pre-application data is also used to help select the projects for which we will ask for additional documentation at the time of application.

The Pre-Application Questionnaire asks basic questions about your organization. The questionnaire is available from the Commission's website, www.landtrustaccreditation.org. The questionnaire is a fill-in-the-blank form with five required attachments.

Slide 6 Straightforward Questions

Now, let’s review the pre-application questionnaire questions. Note that I am not providing the text of the corresponding section of the pre-application questionnaire, only pointing out areas for discussion.

The information requested for these sections of the pre-application are quite straight-forward, so I will not discuss them today in any detail. Some are self-attestations, others just require data that your organization should have readily available. If you have a question regarding any of these questions, please ask them later after the presentation is complete, or please call or e-mail and I will assist you individually.

Slide 7 Straightforward Questions (2)

Slide 8 Question 1: Organization Name and Contact Information

This section is quite clear, except a couple considerations.

Regarding the accreditation primary contact, this is the person you want to receive all official correspondence from the Commission. An organization has only one accreditation primary contact with the Commission, and the person you select is responsible for taking information from the Commission and disseminating it among the accreditation team. So try not to select someone who goes away 4 months out of the year, or who is not comfortable with e-mail and attachments, as much of our correspondence is electronic.

If you have a P.O. Box and a shipping address, please include both addresses in the pre-application. If you have field offices, list the field offices as well, on a separate page if needed.

Slide 9 Question 2. Related Organizations

This is pretty straight-forward, and tells the Commission that it needs to understand the relationships between (or among) the related corporations before inviting a full application from one or each. If you are unsure if you have a related corporation, go ahead and give us a call to discuss it.

Slide 10 Protected Land

This information assists the Commission in getting a "big-picture" overview of your organization's conservation work, particularly important for organizations that do not own many fee properties or easements but often acquire lands that are later transferred to a third party. Include all properties owned, stewarded, transferred or sold in the appropriate fields.

Slide 11 Notes Regarding Protected Land

[Briefly review text on slide]

Slide 12 Organization Budget

The budget amount should reflect the overall organizational budget, even if land conservation is only a part of what your organization does (for instance, if you also run a nature center or museum). If your organization is an independent subsidiary or otherwise legally linked to another entity, then enter your organization's budget here and include information on the related organization in question 2.

Slide 13 Reserve and/or Dedicated Funds

Every organization likely has a few of the fund types listed on this chart. For the purposes of the pre-application, we ask that you categorize all of your funds per the Commission's outline (**in the aggregate**, if your organization has more than one fund in the particular category):

- In the Fund Type box (top left corner) indicate the date of the data.
- For each fund type (as listed by the Commission) indicate the approx. aggregate amount available to the organization, combining funds into the line that best suits

the type of fund (stewardship, legal defense, combined stewardship and defense, etc.).

- In the Description column, briefly describe the limitations on the uses of principal and/or interest from the fund.
- In the Restrictions column, note whether the funds are permanently restricted, temporarily restricted or unrestricted. If you are uncertain, your financial reviewer or auditor should be able to determine the restrictions on a particular fund.

Note that the Commission will require detailed information on the restrictions of each fund at the time of application.

And, for those of you that subscribe to our eNewsletter, The Commission will have a great article on restricted funds in its June 24 edition.

Slide 14 Dates of Policy Adoption

These policies are all required for accreditation per the Land Trust Standards and Practices, except the delegation of authority. Clearly if your board approves all acquisitions, you do not need a delegation policy. To reinforce the policies' importance, the Commission asks for the dates of adoption (if not yet adopted, enter anticipated date of adoption). The Commission has a great *Guidance Document* on policies, which is available on its website.

Slide 15 Required Attachments: Financials

As previously stated, the pre-application has five required attachments. The first two are related to the organization's financials. For the Form 990, the Commission will require the complete Form 990 as filed with the IRS, including all schedules (A, B, etc.), attachments (extensions, etc.), and statements. Regarding the audited financial statement, if there has been no audit (an audit is not specifically required by the practice) or the audit is not yet complete, the Commission will accept a Statement of Financial Position [Balance Sheet] and Statement of Activities [Profit and Loss Sheet] for the financial period covered **by the most recent Form 990, and the year prior.**

Slide 16 Required Attachments: Evidence of Assessment

Even though the Commission is verifying implementation only of indicator practices, the Commission encourages land trusts to think of its work in the context of the entire set of *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. Therefore, documentation is required of the completion of an assessment within the last three years against the full Land *Trust Standards and Practices*.

If your organization uses the Land Trust Alliance tool, *Assessing Your Organization*, documentation can be relatively simple. However, if your organization was assessed using a different tool that was not based on *Land Trust Standards and Practices,* you must include a copy of the assessment tool, and a cover page on the assessment results that identifies how the assessment addressed each of the practices in *Land Trust Standards and Practices*.

Slide 17 Land Conservation Project Lists

As stated in the *Applicant Handbook*, Land Conservation Project Lists (LCPL) must be included for all conservation easements and all fee properties held for conservation by your organization. These will be used by the Commission to select projects for which it will request project documentation as part of the complete application.

This information should be in the form of Land Conservation Project Lists. The Commission prefers <u>and</u> provides template Excel spreadsheets available on its website. An organization may also provide its own database spreadsheet as long as it is one spreadsheet for conservation easements and one spreadsheet for fee title and each includes the data requested for each column per the *Applicant Handbook* and the template Excel spreadsheet.

The *Applicant Handbook*, pages 25-27, has very good instructions on completing the LCPL, so I won't go into much detail here. However, we do have some highlights and some pointers not found in the handbook.

- If you are using a cut-off date, we prefer that the date be as close to the pre-application due date as possible. It would be unacceptable to use data through 2008, for instance, if your pre-application was due in September 2009. We prefer that the date be no older than one to three months.
- Include all fee lands you have acquired and still own and/or conservation easements you hold either alone or in partnership with another entity.

- If a conservation easement is defined as a project made up of multiple easements, we require *a separate line for each easement* within the project. This might happen if the easements are with individual landowners as part of a development.
- For fee properties, you may include multiple parcels that are part of one preserve on a single line. See the example in the *Applicant Handbook* on page 27 for details on how this might be done.
- If you have a third-party complete the LCPL, for instance an intern or consultant, please have someone who is familiar with all of your properties review the LCPL for errors. Some errors that have occurred in the past include listing life estates that hadn't been conveyed yet, or listing parcels that had been transferred to a third party.
- If a property is not owned for conservation, please see the Commission's Guidance Document on fee land management to determine whether you should include it on the LCPL.

Slide 18 Map

One paper map showing approximate locations of your organization's permanent conservation holdings is required as part of your application. The map and project lists provide us with an overview of your land conservation work. The map should show approximate locations of both fee lands and conservation easements. **It should have been updated within the last year, but you may note if there are any recent parcels that are not yet on the map.** The map can be in the format that is most convenient for your organization, and the properties can be indicated to a level of detail that is appropriate and convenient for your organization (anything from dots on a county map to a GIS map with distinct property boundaries).

Slide 19 Submitting Your Pre-Application

Your pre-application must be received by the Commission on the date that it is due. This is not a postmark deadline – please plan ahead to make sure your submission arrives in the Commission's office by the due date. Applicants may provide the Pre-Application Questionnaire, all attachments and Land Conservation Project Lists on a clearly labeled CD or on paper (CD is preferred), but a paper map is required. A pre-application may be submitted early, but the Commission will notify all pre-applicants at the same time whether they are invited to submit a full application and what projects were selected.

Slide 20 Now What?

Slide 21 Commission Reviews Pre-Application and Attachments

While the land trust is waiting for notification of acceptance (which takes no more than five weeks after the pre-application due date) the Commission reviews the details of each pre-application to verify eligibility, the completeness of the pre-application and attachments, and the organization's ability to document compliance at time of application.

If a pre-application is in unacceptable condition, it will not be accepted. However, if one or two items are missing and are quickly produced by the organization the pre-application will be allowed to proceed.

Sometimes there are situations when an organization's pre-application show that the organization will be unable to document compliance at time of application. This particularly relates to easement monitoring and complete baseline documentation reports for all easements. In those instances, a pre-application will not be accepted.

Slide 22 Project Selection

If a pre-application is likely to be accepted, the Commission determines which projects will be selected for inclusion with the application. A minimum of two projects will be selected from an applicant to give reviewers a representative sampling of their conservation work. The Commission generally selects one newer project to determine and evaluate current practice. The Commission also generally selects one older project, recognizing that an older project may not be representative of your current work. However, older projects may be an indication of how prepared your organization is to meet its stewardship obligations. In addition, it will allow the Commission to see how your practices have evolved over time.

Slide 23 Notification of Acceptance or Non-acceptance

The Commission notifies all pre-applicants electronically whether individual pre-applications are accepted or denied. If accepted, the notification will include the list of projects for which the applicant must include project documentation. In addition, the notification will include information about areas where the Commission requests additional information with the complete application (for instance, a fundraising plan or verification that all baseline documentation reports are complete).

If a pre-application is not accepted, the organization will be notified by a phone call from the executive director, followed by a written notification. If the organization wants to re-apply it must follow whatever process is in place at that time.

Slide 24 Public Notice

Once an organization is notified that its pre-application has been accepted it should begin its public comment process by notifying key stakeholders that the organization is applying for accreditation. Complete details are in the *Applicant Handbook* and will be covered in more detail in the ***In Depth: Application for Accreditation Webinar***.

Slide 25 Additional Resources: Commission

Slide 26 Additional Resources: Land Trust Alliance

Slide 27 Questions?