When land trusts consider applying for accreditation, they bring up thoughtful points:

“We want to…but it will take a lot of time.”
“We want to…but there are no guarantees of success.”

“We want to…but it’s just not the right time.”
“We want to…but we’re just not sure we can afford it.”

But ask any land trust that has completed the process and you hear:

“We did it! And we’re glad we did it. We’re much stronger because of accreditation. And now we know that our impact will last.”
The land trust accreditation program is the professionally developed system that recognizes land trusts that meet quality standards. There are many reasons why the 300+ currently accredited land trusts came to the decision to apply for accreditation. But in the end, the result is the same: increased impact—internally and externally.

Your land trust team may be hesitant to begin, concerned that your land trust isn’t ready to pursue accreditation. But it may be time to ask: Could things be better? Here’s why some of your peers decided things could be better by participating in the accreditation process, and how it can help you too.

**For A Deeper Trust**

*In Ourselves And By Our Community*

The leadership of the all-volunteer Salem Land Trust in Connecticut wanted to shore up against risk. David Bingham, the president of the board, says that they had been neglecting some important aspects of long-term land conservation. “Each land acquisition potentially placed us one step closer to a legal defense problem,” he says.

So the board pulled together to assess their organization and identify its weaknesses. Then they addressed the gaps, met the Land Trust Standards and Practices and went on to earn accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. David says, “In the small community of those who understand the work of land trusts, accreditation has exemplified our public commitment—but, more important, accreditation has deepened the trust our board members place in themselves and their ability to achieve sustainable conservation.”

Similarly, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust also sought deeper public trust. “We get funding from three local governments,” says board member Nancy Hyde. “They’ve told us that our accredited status gives us credibility. The fact that we were willing to voluntarily take on this rigorous examination of our mission and operation helped to strengthen their feeling that we could be trusted.”

**For Securing Funding**

*We’re Really In It For The Long Run*

As Charlie Tennesen learned while serving as a board member of Wisconsin’s Caledonia Conservancy, an organization’s positive reputation can turn a casual chat with a potential easement donor into a valuable land transaction years later. “In a land trust, things are long-term,” he says. “You may talk to a person at a picnic, and then five years later the conversation leads to results. Being professional and solid really means a lot over the long haul.”

That understanding was a driving factor behind the efforts of Charlie and the Caledonia Conservancy to become accredited. “The stamp of accreditation allows the organization to grow in the future,” he says. “Once you’re accredited, you can say to prospective donors, ‘Look what we’ve done. We’re a solid organization. We’re going to take care of that land.’ Accreditation helps you sell that idea.”

**For Streamlining Our Work**

*Making Our Business Better And Our Training Easier*

For decades, the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust in Maine relied on volunteers to preserve a local landscape of spectacular coastlines and historic lighthouses. As it grew and added its first staff, the land trust realized that it needed to do its work with more consistency in its standards and practices.

“The process enabled us to take a step back and standardize how we do things,” says Christopher Franklin, executive director of Cape Elizabeth Land Trust. “Accreditation gave us a manual for how the organization is run—so there’s no ambiguity,” explains Franklin. “That’s beneficial for training new board members and staff. We have well-researched, well-documented practices to follow going forward.”

“Accreditation shows our donors and landowners that we are serious about our work and will be here for a long, long, long time.” SMITH COVEY, DAMARISCOTTA RIVER ASSOCIATION (ME)
As the 300+ accredited land trusts will attest, “The need to hold ourselves to high standards will never go away,” says Larry Kueter, former chair of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. “Every day land trusts have to live the promise of perpetuity. And the success of conservation relies on the constant support of the public and public institutions. Land trusts cannot take a break from the standards they hold themselves to. It is not possible to predict when the land trust community will be required to stand up, whether in its own community, at a state legislature or in Congress, and defend the permanence and quality of the work we do.”

Be a part of the strong community of land trusts ready to defend and secure land conservation well into the future by taking the first steps onto the path to accreditation. It’s easier than ever to get there. With a streamlined process and greater support, land trusts now achieve accreditation more efficiently than ever. We look forward to welcoming you onto the celebration stage.

Accreditation Matters—For Today And Tomorrow

So, what’s been holding your land trust back from applying for accreditation?

**No Time?**
Many land trusts carve out time by putting some of the usual workload aside. It’s a short-term sacrifice, but worth it for the long-term gain.

**No Money?**
Many funders understand that accreditation is a good investment. Talk to your major donors about supporting your process. You can also find grants to help.

**No Guarantees?**
It’s true but there’s an abundance of support available and the success rate for first-time applicants is close to 90%.

**Not the Right Time?**
Make accreditation part of your long-term planning.

**SAVE ON INSURANCE**
Accredited land trusts are 18% less likely to face a legal challenge. Because they carry less risk, they qualify for reduced rates for Terrafirma insurance, saving an average of $770 per year. Accredited land trusts also qualify for additional discounts on land trust group-rate Directors & Officers insurance policies.

**EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES**
Increasingly, accreditation is required for state conservation incentives, philanthropic support and government partnerships. Even when not required, it gives you a competitive edge.

**BOOST FUNDRAISING**
Funders want to support well-run, effective nonprofits. Accreditation provides assurance that you’ll make good use of their contributions.

**ATTRACT TALENT**
Accreditation signals to potential staff and board members that your land trust is a strong and respected organization.

**STRENGTHEN LAND CONSERVATION & PUBLIC FUNDING**
As more land trusts meet national standards for quality, we’re building public trust—the key to public funding and conservation incentives. We’re showing Congress, the Internal Revenue Service and voters that land conservation is worthy of public support.
Get Started Today

Here are some steps you can take to start your journey:

1. **Talk about it**
   Find accredited land trusts you share something in common with. Start conversations and learn from their experience.

2. **See if you’re ready**
   Use the “Are You Ready?” checklist to see if you’re eligible. If now isn’t the right time, build accreditation into your long-range plans.

3. **Build support**
   Discuss goals and challenges. Identify leaders. Talk with potential funders. Find resources to help you achieve your goals.

4. **Go for it**
   Register—and you’re on your way!

Learn more at: [www.landtrustaccreditation.org/first-time-accreditation](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/first-time-accreditation)

Questions About Accreditation?

We’re here to help. Contact us today!

**Land Trust Accreditation Commission**
36 Phila Street, Suite 2
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518-587-3143 | [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org)
info@landtrustaccreditation.org

**Land Trust Alliance**
1660 L Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036
202-638-4725 | [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org)

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No Need To Go It Alone

The Land Trust Alliance and the Land Trust Accreditation Commission both have an abundance of resources to help, every step of the way, to get ready now to apply for accreditation. Here are some resources you can count on to help you meet your goal:

- “Assess Your Organization” tools
- In-depth curriculum covering all Land Trust Standards and Practices
- Workshops and webinars targeted to accreditation goals
- One-on-one mentoring from Alliance regional staff, or land trusts that already achieved accreditation
- Guidance on any concerns that are unique to your land trust

Visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org) and [http://tlc.lta.org](http://tlc.lta.org) to learn more.