



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.

Guidance Document

Indicator Practice 12C. Land Management

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission occasionally publishes Guidance Documents to clarify how the Commission will evaluate a land trust's compliance with indicator practices drawn from Land Trust Standards and Practices. These documents may be amended from time to time. Guidance Documents are intended to complement information provided by the Land Trust Alliance on how to implement the practices that can be found at <http://learningcenter.lta.org>.

Elements of the Practice

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission will evaluate applicant land trusts to see if they are meeting each of the elements of this practice.

- The applicant has a written land management plan or summary for each property it holds in fee.
- Permitted activities and restrictions, if any, are noted in the plan or summary.

Contents of a Land Management Plan or Summary

The applicant should have a formal land management plan or a written internal working summary document for each property it owns. There is no prescribed format or length for a land management plan or summary. Contents of management plans or summaries include the items below.

- A description of the property (size, location, etc.).
- A description of the conservation values or attributes (the reasons why the land trust protected this property), if any.
- A summary of the restrictions that came with the property or that were placed on the property after the land trust took ownership, if any.
- A description of potential threats to the conservation values or areas of special concern (such as invasive species, neighbor encroachment, unauthorized access).
- Overall management goals (including identification of permitted activities) and actions necessary to achieve the goals.*

Indicator Practice 12C. Land Management

The land trust inventories the natural and cultural features of each property prior to developing a management plan that identifies its conservation goals for the property and how it plans to achieve them. Permitted activities are compatible with the conservation goals, stewardship principles and public benefit mission of the organization. Permitted activities occur only when the activity poses no significant threat to the important conservation values, reduces threats or restores ecological processes, and/or advances learning and demonstration opportunities.

Excerpted from Land Trust Standards and Practices

- A timeline for planned management activities and for regular inspections of the property.

*If the property is intended for transfer or sale, this may include actions the land trust needs to take until the property is transferred or sold. If the land trust is waiting to complete a detailed management plan, this may include interim actions until the final management plan is complete.

Properties Requiring a Management Plan or Summary

In general, the Commission expects that every property held in fee by the applicant will have a management plan or summary at the time it is acquired. If an applicant has not been in the practice of completing a management plan or summary by the time of closing, the Commission may provide the land trust with an expectation that it has a management plan or summary by the time future properties are acquired. If an accredited land trust submits an application for renewal of its accredited status, the Commission will evaluate the land trust's progress toward meeting this expectation at that time.

Applicants have asked questions about a variety of common situations where a land trust may or may not have a management plan or summary and the Commission offers this guidance.

- Exceptions are not made for the size of the property. Even if it is a small parcel, the Commission will look for a management plan or summary.
 - Exceptions are not made for wilderness properties or those that are not actively managed. Keeping a property forever wild or choosing to leave it alone is a management strategy, and the land trust should have written documentation of its intent.
 - Exceptions are not made for properties the land trust intends to transfer (such as to a public agency or other conservation holder). Here, the documentation would indicate what actions the land trust must carry out while the property is in its ownership.
 - Exceptions are not made for office facilities that are located on a property or in a historic structure that the land trust owns. In this case, the management plan or summary should address the natural or cultural features that require management.
- In the event that common law principles are used to create an easement (requiring an appurtenant fee parcel) the need for a management plan on the appurtenant fee parcel will depend on the management of the property. If the appurtenant fee parcel is managed as a separate parcel from the property under easement, then a management plan or summary will likely be required. If the appurtenant fee parcel is managed as part of the conservation easement-protected land, a management plan or summary will generally not be needed.
 - Examples of other possible exceptions include the following.
 - Properties where the landowner retains a life estate.
 - Properties managed under a lease agreement with another party, as the lease would serve as a temporary management plan.

For more information

Visit the Land Trust Alliance's complete online resource, The Learning Center, <http://learningcenter.lta.org> for more information on implementing these practices. See especially the Standards and Practices Curriculum course "Caring for Land Trust Properties."

Visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org or call 518-587-3143 for more information on the accreditation program.