Is your land trust thinking about applying for first-time accreditation?

The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation. It is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence. Each accredited land trust completes a rigorous review process and joins a network of organizations united by strong ethical practices.

Is my land trust eligible/ready to apply for first-time accreditation?

The first thing to do is to take the Commission's, "Are You Ready" quiz. There are certain key requirements a land trust must meet before applying. If your land trust can answer 'yes' to all the questions, then you're ready for the next steps. If your land trust answers, 'not yet', then it's a good time for your organization to develop a road map on how to get your land trust ready to apply. If you're unsure of where to begin, try reaching out to:

- An accredited land trust in your area. They may be able to offer guidance on how they prepared for the first-time accreditation process.
- Your regional Land Trust Alliance Field Office staff. They can help connect you with other accredited land trusts and keep you informed about Alliance educational opportunities.
- The Land Trust Accreditation Commission. We're always happy to speak to land trusts considering first-time accreditation. We can answer questions about the accreditation requirements and clarify the process first-time process steps.

While not required for accreditation, we also encourage you to do an organizational assessment to consider how an organization is meeting all of Land Trust Standards and Practices.

[accordion id="a1" heading="Click for Tip about additional reading and resources"]

Check out the Commission’s blog series on how a land trust can best prepare for the first-time application process:

- Part I, Be Prepared: Review Your Policies
- Part II, Be Prepared: The Importance of Annual Monitoring and Inspections
- Part III, Be Prepared: Recordkeeping
- Part IV, Be Prepared: Don't Forget the Date
- Part V, Be Prepared: Annual Financial Evaluations

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Expressing Intent

If you know your land trust is ready to apply, it's a good idea to let the Commission know and send us an expression of intent! If you're still developing a roadmap to be ready to apply for first-time accreditation and are still a few years out, we still encourage you to let us know. Sending the Commission an expression of intent is an informal process and does not bind your land trust to apply at a specific time. Letting the Commission know your intent to apply means:

- Your land trust will receive written confirmation of its intent to register that can then be shared with interested parties (such as grant funders).
- The Commission can share your future intent with Alliance staff which will help you stay connected to educational resources.
- The Commission will have your land trust on a contact list about first-time accreditation. We'll be able to directly let you know when the lottery will be opening and any other pertinent application process information.

The Lottery

There may be more land trusts who want to apply for first-time accreditation than the Commission has the resources to review, so a lottery to apply is held once a year. For example, for 2024 first-time applications the lottery will be held in late Summer 2023. Sending in an expression of intent does not mean you've entered the lottery.

- The lottery for a spot to apply for first-time application in 2025 will open on August 1 and close on September 9. There will be one round for up to 10 first-time applicants with a pre-application due date of January 30, 2025 and application due date of May 8, 2025.
Land trusts register (enter the lottery) during the open dates. To learn more about the lottery registration process please visit the Registration page.

Listen to leaders in the land trust community speak about the value of accreditation and how it helped their organizations grow and thrive. Having trouble viewing this video in your browser? Try using the direct link.