During this season of thanks, the Commission extends its gratitude to the more than 125 organizations that have or are planning to participate in the accreditation program. With each application we continue to learn and find ways to refine the accreditation process. Read our December eNewsletter to learn about changes to the pre-application and current applicants.

Changes to the Pre-Application

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission has made some modifications to the accreditation pre-application, effective for pre-applications due January 15, 2009.

The following changes have been made:

1) Land Conservation Project List (LCPL)
The LCPL now requires 36 months of monitoring dates for conservation easements and/or inspection dates for fee properties. This will allow the Commission to better evaluate annual monitoring practices.

2) Required attachments
In addition to the Land Conservation Project List referenced above, the pre-application also requires the following attachments:

   a. Most recent Form 990 (or Form 990-EZ) and, if applicable, most recent Form 990T. This will allow us to determine the accreditation fee.

   b. Audited financial statement (if no audit or audit not yet complete, Statement of Financial Position [Balance Sheet] and Statement of Activities) for the financial period covered by the most recent Form 990 and the year prior.

   c. Documentation of the completion of an assessment against the full Land Trust Standards and Practices within the last three years. This may be the completed summary pages 18 and 37 from Assessing Your Organization (AYO) or other documentation that AYO was completed (such as board meeting minutes). If AYO was not the assessment tool used, attach the completed assessment tool with a cover page(s) that identifies how the assessment addressed each of the practices in Land Trust Standards and Practices.

3) A new section 3 asks questions to confirm that potential applicants understand and will be able to provide the documentation necessary for completing the accreditation application.

4) Changes to section 11 regarding reserve and/or dedicated funds help clarify the information being requested in the Description column.

5) The $750 registration fee has replaced the pre-application fee, therefore no additional funds are due until the balance of the accreditation fee is submitted as part of the complete accreditation application.

Please note that the Applicant Handbook does not yet reflect the changes made to the pre-application or the application process but we expect to have an updated Applicant Handbook by December 19. The new pre-application materials are available here.

Public Comments on Current Applicants

Applications were received from 23 organizations in November as part of 2008 Round 3. The Commission is currently accepting comments from the public on these and all current applicants for accreditation. For a complete list of current applicants and to submit a comment, please visit our Public Comments page.

Application Tip: Changes to the IRS Form 990

IRS Form 990 is the report that must be filed each year with the Internal Revenue Service by all tax-exempt organizations. In addition to being required by the IRS, many state agencies that regulate charitable solicitations also require charities to file the Form 990 as part of their annual report. It is also a required attachment to the pre-application for accreditation and is used by the Commission to evaluate compliance with several of the accreditation indicator practices.

In August, the IRS released revised instructions for the redesigned Form 990 for the 2008 tax year, along with additional background documents to help nonprofits make the transition to the new form. The Land Trust Alliance has put together a Detailed Guide to the New 990 on its website.

Register for 2009

If your land trust would like to apply for accreditation, you can complete an online registration form to hold your place for 2009. Registration is the required first step in applying for accreditation.

Use the links in the sidebar to learn more about registration details. And as always, call us! The Commission staff is here to answer your questions about the accreditation program.
- Review the Applicant Handbook
- Review the application for accreditation
- Register!