

Your land trust did it! You registered, completed your pre-application and submitted your main application on time. Your decision should be coming any day now...right?

If you've been through the first-time accreditation or renewal, you might already know that submitting the main application is not the end of the application process story. The application process is multi-step and contains lots of acronyms and accreditation jargon – it can be challenging to remember what happens when. We want to shed light on "behind the scenes" at the Commission with what happens after your land trust submits the main application.



[accordion id="a1" heading="Click for Tips and Guidance"]

- Not sure what we mean by "Main Application"? You can review the [reference copy of the entire renewal application](#).
- Renewal applicants use the Accreditation Management System (AMS) to complete the application process and each organization designates a "Primary Contact" in the AMS. The primary contact will be the person who receives updates and emails from the Commission. [Make sure your primary contact is up to date](#).
- Looking for an outline of all the application process steps? [Check out the Renewal Handbook](#).

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STEP ONE: The hand off, confirmation, and commencement

Once you complete and submit your main application, your primary contact will receive confirmation from your review staff member. From the time you submit your main application, **it may take up to three months after the official due date for the application review to start**. It's important to remember that the Commission is reviewing applications on a rolling basis, and your review staff member is likely completing the review for another land trust. But don't worry, your primary contact will receive a message when the application review commences.



[accordion id="a2" heading="Click to Learn About Behind the Scenes"]

Your review staff member partners with one of the volunteer commissioners during the application review. That staff member and commissioner review your application together, and your primary contact will be notified about who was assigned to your land trust. Learn more about the [staff](#) and [commissioners](#).

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STEP TWO: AIRs

Your staff reviewer and commissioner read through all your narratives and review all the attachments provided. This takes time! The application asks for a lot of documentation, and we want to give each applicant their due time and consideration. **It will take several weeks from the time your review starts until the time you receive any Additional Information Requests (AIRs)**. Your primary contact will be notified as soon as the AIRs are uploaded into the AMS. You will also be provided with an AIR response due date (~3 months from the time you are notified). Your land trust will need to upload the requested information by the due date. You will get a reminder about two weeks before the deadline, but materials can be uploaded and submitted at any time.



[accordion id="a3" heading="Click to Learn About Behind the Scenes"]

Getting an AIR is part of the renewal process – they are a chance for your land trust to provide clarification or take corrective action to show you're meeting the requirements. If your land trust is unsure of the reason for a specific AIR, you are encouraged to reach out to your review staff member – they can provide clarification about the requirement or related documentation.

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[accordion id="a4" heading="Click for AIR Response Tip"]

Did your AIR include the Commission asking for documentation? While you can upload a document as an attachment, it can be helpful to your reviewers (and ultimately your land trust) if you provide a short narrative to explain what the document is and how it pertains to your AIR response.

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STEP THREE: AIRs Review

Once you submit your land trust's AIR responses, your review staff member and commissioner will evaluate your materials.



[accordion id="a5" heading="Click to Learn More About Behind the Scenes"]

While staff reviewers are integral to the review process, ultimately it is the Commission who makes the accreditation decision. The Commission's decision is based on the review team's evaluation of compliance with the requirements.

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STEP FOUR: Commission Meetings

Commissioners meet several times a year – some meetings are in person and some are virtual. **There are only two or three meetings each year where accreditation decisions are made.** When a decision is made is based on the timing of the Commission's meeting schedule. The Commission makes final decisions on each complete application based on the review team's evaluation of the applicant's compliance with *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and the *Requirements*.

It's important to understand that the Commission can make one of the following three decisions at the conclusion of the renewal process: award renewal, conditionally renew, or not award renewal. For more information about each of these, [please review our Accreditation Application Decisions Policy to learn more.](#)



[accordion id="a6" heading="Click to Learn More About Behind the Scenes"]

Since there are only a few decision-making meetings each year, your land trust may have a considerable amount of time pass before hearing the Commission's decision. We do our best to provide timely responses and decisions, but it can be challenging if an AIR response is received right when a meeting occurs. We know waiting is hard, especially when several months have passed before hearing from the Commission. Here are some important notes and guidance:

1. **You're accredited in the interim.** Even if your license agreement has an expiration date that comes before you hear a decision, your land trust remains accredited as long as you are still in the application process. If accreditation is renewed, the next term of accreditation does not begin until the Commission notifies you of the decision.
2. **We're here for your questions.** If you have not heard from the Commission and are wondering when you will be up for a decision, reach out to your review staff member. They can provide a timeline of when you can expect to hear your final decision.

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STEP FIVE: Paperwork and Announcements

After a Commission decision-making meeting, there are still a few steps before we can give out the news! License agreements have to be drawn up, and correspondence about the decision findings needs to be created. **It takes time after a meeting before we're ready to call the primary contact and relay the Commission's decision.** We often ask land trusts who have received accreditation to embargo the good news until we can have a coordinated release day – it ensures that we have had a chance to speak to all the land trusts getting decisions.

We hope that by illuminating what happens at the Commission after we receive your application helps you understand how seriously we undertake this work. Staff reviewers and commissioners are awed by the amount of information provided and the conservation stories they learn through their reviews. We know it can be hard to wait, but we want to give equal attention to every single applicant – you deserve it.