



New York State Conservation Partnership Program

Frequently Asked Questions

September 2013

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Applying for a Conservation Partnership Program Grant?

My land trust is interested in applying for a 2013-2014 grant – should I participate in one of the upcoming regional land trust roundtables?

Yes! Roundtables are the best opportunity for discussing projects and grant questions, and are also a good way to network with land trust partners in your region. Staff and board members are strongly encouraged to attend!

This year we will be hosting five (5) roundtables:

- **Wednesday, October 2** (10:30 am - 4:00 pm) – New York City, hosted by Brooklyn Queens Land Trust (Kings County)
- **Tuesday, October 8** (10:30 am - 4:00 pm) - Capital Region, hosted by Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park (Saratoga County)
- **Thursday, October 17** (10:30 am - 4:00 pm) – Northern NY, hosted by Champlain Area Trails (Essex County)
- **Thursday, October 24** (10:30 am - 4:00 pm) - Hudson Valley, hosted by Kingston Land Trust (Ulster County)
- **Thursday, November 7** (10:30 am - 4:00 pm) – Western/ Central NY, hosted by Genesee Land Trust (Monroe County)

Will you be offering information calls for applicants again this year?

Yes! As in past years, we have scheduled information conference calls for prospective applicants. You are encouraged to join in the Q&A or just listen in. (888-338-1010, passcode: 17151705#)

- **Thursday, September 12, 10:00 a.m.:** Conference call for prospective applicants of Professional Development (staffing) Grants. The deadline for Letters of Interest will be Friday, October 11th.
- **Thursday, November 14, 10:00 a.m.:** Conference call for all interested applicants. The deadline for all final grants will be Friday, December 6th.

What's new for the 2013-2014 grant cycle?

No changes have been made for this grants cycle.

What materials should I review before applying for grants, and how do I get more information about the Conservation Partnership Program?

- Attend a regional roundtable and participate in one of our information conference calls.
- Request for Proposals
- Evaluation Criteria
- Description of Eligible Projects
- This FAQ Guide!

- Our NYSCPP website. Bookmark it! <http://www.landtrustalliance.org/about/regional-programs/ne/nyscpp>. Source of all the latest updates, access to past grant award lists, sample applications, and news articles.

Still have questions? Please contact the Alliance's Northeast Office at (518) 587-0774.

When are 2013-2014 grant applications due?

All applications are due by 5 p.m. on Friday December 6, 2013. Pre-proposals for Professional Development Grants must be submitted by 5 p.m. on Friday October 11, 2013.

How do I fill out an online application or complete a report?

Beginning in 2011, grant applications and grant reports are to be completed using our online grants program. To fill out an application or to submit a report, follow the link:

<https://www.grantinterface.com/Common/LogOn.aspx?urlkey=landtrustalliancenyssc>. Then, you must login to an existing account, or set up a new account.

If you do not remember if you have an account, or if you have forgotten your username or password, please contact Katrina Howey, Northeast Program Coordinator at (518) 587-0774, khowey@lta.org

What are the four grant categories?

1. Capacity & Excellence Grants
 - Capacity Grants—grants of up to \$50,000 (25% match, up to 50% can be in-kind)
 - Stewardship Grants—grants of up to \$10,000 (no match required)
 - Assessment Grants—grants of up to \$5,000 (\$500 match, cash or in-kind)
2. Catalyst Grants—grants of up to \$50,000 (25% match, up to 50% can be in-kind)
3. Professional Development Grants —grants of up to \$75,000 (25% cash match)
4. Transaction Grants —grants of up to \$50,000 (25% cash match, up to 50% must be dedicated to stewardship/ defense fund)

NOTE: Individual land trust grant funding is capped at \$80,000 in the 2012-2013 grant cycle.

What activities and projects are eligible for funding under each of the grant categories?

Please refer to the List of Eligible Projects and the Request for Proposals for details.

When will my land trust receive notice of an award and when will we receive our funding?

Grant awards are typically announced in March or April depending on timing of state funds. The announcement includes a press event to which all grantee land trusts (staff/ board members) are encouraged to attend. Grant funds are processed once the Alliance receives the signed grant agreement, which the Alliance mails out 1-2 weeks after the official announcement. Grant funds typically take about two weeks to be processed and mailed from the Alliance's national office.

Funds for Assessment grants are released only after a signed contract with a qualified Alliance-trained assessor has been received by the Alliance Northeast office.

Funds for Transaction grants are released only after proof of closing is received (for example, a copy of an executed conservation easement)

Second installments of Catalyst and Professional Development grants are released after receipt of a satisfactory interim report approximately half way into the 27-month project schedule.

What are the grant periods for each category?

Capacity & Excellence Grants—January 1, 2014 – July 1, 2015 (18 months)

Catalyst Grants —January 1, 2014 – March 31, 2016 (27 months)

Professional Development Grants — January 1, 2014 – March 31, 2016 (27 months)

Transaction Grants — January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2014 (24 months) (Note: this grant period is retroactive beginning January 1, 2013.)

What's the best way to budget for the grant-funded project and calculate the match requirement?

Capacity, Catalyst, Professional Development and Transaction grants require a “25% match”. What this means is that the land trust must contribute at least 25% of the overall project budget, with the grant covering up to 75% of the overall project budget.

Note: Up to 50% of the required match for Capacity Grants and Catalyst Grants can be “in kind” donations of project-related goods or professional services. See FAQ for description of what is considered an “in kind” contribution.

There are three simple ways to calculate the grant and match requirement – be sure to check your math before submitting your final applications:

1. **If you know the overall proposed project budget** (what it will cost the land trust to do the work):
The grant can cover up to 75% of the total costs, while the land trust provides at least a 25% match.

For example, if the overall cost of your proposed project is \$10,000, the land trust may request a \$7,500 grant (75% of \$10,000), assuming it can secure a minimum \$2,500 match (25% of \$10,000). In other words: Overall Project Budget = Grant (75%) + Match (25%)

2. **If you know how much match you can expect to secure for the proposed grant** (the minimum match your land trust can secure):
Multiply the expected match amount by three to calculate the maximum amount of grant funding that can be requested.

For example, if your land trust expects to raise no more than a \$5,000 match, then you should not apply for more than \$15,000 in grant funds. The total project budget in this instance would be \$20,000. In other words, Match x 3 = Maximum Grant Amount.

3. **If you know how much grant funding you need for the proposed grant** (the amount of grant funding needed for land trust project) :

Divide the desired grant amount by three to calculate the minimum match requirement.

For example, if your land trust needs \$15,000 in grant funding, it must be able to secure at least \$5,000 in match. Again, the total project budget in this instance would be \$20,000. In other words, Requested Grant Amount / 3 = Minimum Match Amount.

What can be included as match and what does in-kind match mean?

Cash match may come from private sources such as foundation and individual donors, Federal and local grants. Other state grants or state funds can be included in your overall project budget but do not count toward the match requirement.

We encourage applicants to identify new sources of funding for their cash match, when possible. If operating or reserve funds are to be used as cash match, we require a board-approved statement indicating that these specific funds are available and will be dedicated for the required match. Note: staff time, if paid by grantee on grant-related activities, is considered a cash donation.

In-kind match are contributions other than grant-related cash expenses incurred by the land trust. The general rule to follow is to determine whether the organization would have purchased the services if they had not been donated.

In-kind match must be clearly documented and can include: fair market value of donated professional services, donation of materials or other grant-related goods (e.g. meeting rooms, equipment, printing), as well as donation of **volunteer time for grant-related activities** (e.g. trail construction, stewardship activities, administrative functions). Volunteer time must be quantifiable and the land trust needs to have a policy for tracking and recording grant-related volunteer time if part of the in-kind match.

It is difficult to put a dollar value on volunteer time. For the 2012-2013 grant cycle, contributions of volunteer time for in-kind match should adhere to the Independent Sector's standard benchmark for New York. Visit , http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html for additional guidance. The current rate is \$28.73 an hour, but this is subject to change.

Volunteer time does not include board members participating in regular board activities. If a board member contributes professional services above and beyond his or her regular board activities, or if a board member contributes as a volunteer to perform above and beyond grant-related work (e.g. trail construction, stewardship activities, administrative functions).this may count as in-kind match.

Grantees are required to document and substantiate all match contributions, cash and in-kind. The Alliance may also request a copy of the organization's policies on volunteers and standard board member responsibilities.

How will my application be evaluated?

Please refer to the Primary and Secondary Evaluation Criteria.

Grant Reports and Extensions

When are grant reports due?

All final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period. Catalyst and Professional Development Grants also require an interim report, due approximately half way through the grant period.

Please refer to your projects Grant Agreement (received when a grant has been awarded) for more details.

What do I need to include as documentation for deliverables?

Please refer to the Deliverable Addendum. If you are still unsure what to include, contact Katrina or Ethan in the Alliance's Northeast Office.

Why is it important to submit grant reports when they are due? Can incomplete or missing reports impact my land trust's ability to receive future grants?

It is very important that reports be submitted on time. If the project is taking longer than expected, then an extension may be needed. If you think you will not be able to complete your report on time please contact the Alliance's Northeast Office. Late, missing or incomplete reports may impact your land trust's eligibility to receive Conservation Partnership Program grants in the future.

Can I make changes to my original proposal? What if the project cannot be completed or my land trust cannot spend all of the grant money awarded?

The Alliance recognizes that circumstances can change that impact your grant funded project. If you need to make a change after the project has been funded, you must contact the Alliance. Any material changes to the scope, cost, or timetable of the grant-funded project require prior notification and written approval from the Alliance.

If your project cannot be completed or your project comes in under budget and you have left over grant funds to spend, you must contact Katrina or Ethan in the Alliance's Northeast Office.

How do I ask for an extension and when should I ask for an extension?

To request an extension, grantees must contact Katrina Howey, Northeast Program Coordinator at (518) 587-0774 or khowey@lta.org. The Alliance will then assign the form to you to complete through the online grants system used for your applications and other reports.

How long of an extension should I ask for?

Extensions are typically granted in quarterly increments of between 3 and 12 months. Projects often take longer than expected so we encourage grantees to be conservative in estimating the addition time that will be required. Subsequent extensions are discouraged.

We recommend contacting the Alliance at least thirty (30) days before the end of the original grant period.

Do extensions impact my land trusts ability to apply for future grants?

A proper extension request does not necessarily impact a land trust's standing for future Conservation Partnership Program funding. Unauthorized delays without extension requests may impact eligibility for future funding. As well, the Alliance tracks the year to year performance of grantee land trusts – it is advantageous to complete projects in a timely fashion because past grant performance is considered in the evaluation process.

Put simply, if your grant funded project is taking longer than expected, it is the grantee's responsibility to communicate that to the Alliance and to request an extension.

Using the Online Application and Reporting System

Do I need to create a new account? How do I find my login information?

If you have already used the system to apply for a grant or to submit a report for a grant, then you already have an account. Your username is your email address and then whatever password you chose. If you are unsure about your account information, please contact Katrina Howey in the Northeast Office, khowey@lta.org, (518) 587-0774.

Do I have access to previous applications and reports my land trust has submitted?

If you already have an account in the system and used it to submit a previous application or report then you still have access to these documents when you log in. Note, the system is organized by user accounts, not organization accounts. If the land trust's account will be accessed and used by a different board or staff member, please seek assistance from Katrina Howey in the Northeast Office, khowey@lta.org, (518) 587-0774.

How often do I need to save a document I am working on? Does the system time out?

Unfortunately, yes, the online application and reporting system does time out. We strongly recommend that you save your work at least every 15 minutes. The save button is at the bottom of the screen, next to the submit button.

I want to work on my application or report offline. Can I download the questions into a Word document?

Grant application questions can be downloaded and saved as a PDF by clicking on the words "Question List" next to the PDF icon at the top of the application form. If you work on the application or report offline in a Word document, you can then copy and paste your application information directly into the online system. This is the recommended way to draft your applications as it allows for easy review and editing. Once your application materials are in final draft form, you simply transfer the information to the online system.

What if I upload the wrong attachment? Can I change it?

Yes, there is now a delete button. Click delete, and then upload again to select a new file to upload. Remember, the uploaded file will not be attached to the application or report until you hit save.

What if I need to upload more than one document to answer a particular question?

Unfortunately at this time the program does not allow for multiple file uploads. Our vendor Foundant may add this feature at some point, but for now all documents must be merged into one and then attached.

There are several ways to do this:

1. Print out all the documents you wish to attach, then scan them together into one document (Word/PDF)
2. Put all documents into a single zip file, and attach the zip file
3. If you have Adobe Acrobat, you can merge your documents together (PDF)
4. For additional assistance, please contact Katrina Howey in the Northeast Office, khowey@lta.org, (518) 587-0774.

Where is the submit button?

It is at the very end of the online application page (scroll all the way down). Once you submit your application, further edits can't be made unless you contact Katrina Howey in the Northeast Office, at khowey@lta.org or (518) 587-0774.

How do I print a copy of my application or report?

Click on "Application Packet" or "Follow-up Packet" next to the PDF icon at the top of the screen. Be sure to save a copy of this PDF for your files.

Where can I get more information or help in using the online system?

This FAQ guide should also help answer most of your questions.

If you still have questions, contact Katrina Howey, Northeast Program Coordinator, at khowey@lta.org or at (518) 587-0774.