Land Trust Alliance
Together, conserving the places you love

Frequently Asked Questions

2018-2019 New York State Conservation Partnership Program

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Below you will find answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP). Click on the links below to go directly to the answer.

Applying for a Conservation Partnership Program Grant

1. **What materials should I review before applying for a grant? Where can I find more information about the Conservation Partnership Program?**

   - Request for Applications
   - Evaluation Criteria
   - Roundtables and Informational Calls – all interested applicants are strongly encouraged to attend one or more of these meetings and/or calls.
   - NYSCPP Website – website includes all of the above documents as well as links to summaries of previously funded projects and resources like the State Open Space Plan that applicants may want to review and reference in their project narratives.

2. **What are the matching requirements and how do I calculate match?**

The Conservation Partnership Program is a cost-sharing program, meaning up to 75% of the total project budget can be covered by the grant, while the land trust provides at least the remaining 25% as match.

While all Conservation Partnership Program Grants require a minimum 25% match, each grant category has slightly different requirements, some allowing a portion of the match to be in-kind and others requiring all cash. Please refer to the Request for Applications for grant category specifics.

There are three simple ways to determine the size of the grant you can ask for and the minimum match required.

a) **If you know the total estimated project budget, calculate %'s:**
   Total Project Budget = $25,000
   Maximum Grant Request = $18,750 (75% of $25,000)
   Minimum Match Requirement = $6,250 (25% of $25,000)

b) **If you know how much match your land trust can put forward, multiply by 3:**
   Matching Funds Available = $4,000
   Maximum Grant Request = $4,000 x 3 = $12,000
   Total Project Budget = $4,000 (match) + $12,000 (grant) = $16,000

c) **If you know how much grant funding you intend to request, divide by 3:**
   Maximum Grant Request = $42,000
   Minimum Match Requirement = $42,000 / 3 = $14,000
   Total Project Budget = $42,000 (grant) + $14,000 (match) = $56,000

3. What is the difference between cash and in-kind match?

Cash Match

Actual cash contributions from non-state sources, i.e. applicants operating or reserve fund, private foundation grant, individual donors, Federal and local grants. Applicants are encouraged to identify and leverage new sources of funding for their cash match, whenever possible. If operating or reserve funds are to be used as cash match, applicants must submit a board-approved statement indicating that these specific funds are available and authorized to be dedicated for the required match.

Please note: staff hours dedicated to the implementation of a grant funded project are considered part of the land trusts cash match, but need to be documented by title, hourly cost of employment, and number of hours worked.

In-kind Match

Contributions in the form of the value of donated goods (food and beverage, meeting space, supplied) and services (pro bono legal counsel, contractor hours), including volunteer hours worked. As a guide for valuing volunteer contributions, applicants should adhere to the Independent Sector's standard volunteer benchmark for New York.

Volunteer time does not include board members participating in regular ongoing board activities. However, 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 can count as in-kind match. The Alliance may request a copy of the organization's policies on volunteer services and standard board member responsibilities.

Please note: in the case of projects that involve multiple partners, in-kind match does not include goods or services donated by one partner to another partner that is not the grantee organization. For example, your organization applies for a Catalyst Grant to work with three other organizations on a study about regional migration patterns. Organization A is the grant applicant. Organization B purchases and donates trail cameras to Organizations A, C and D. Only the value of the camera donated to Organization A, the grant recipient, is eligible as in-kind match.

Grantees are required to document and substantiate all match contributions, cash and in-kind.

4. What does the question about capital improvements in excess of $15,000 mean?

Applicants for Stewardship & Resource Management Grants and Transaction Grants that are seeking funds to help cover the costs of capital improvements on conserved lands are required to obtain at least three bid estimates for the proposed work. The $15,000 limit is for a single piece of the project, not the cumulative cost.

For example, your organization is looking to make public access improvements to a preserve that will include a new information kiosk, trail markers, facilities and a new parking area.

The estimated costs of each portion of this project are as follows:

Kiosk - $3,000
Trail Markers - $2,000
Facilities - $10,000
Parking Lot - $20,000

Applicants must obtain at least three bid estimates from contractors for the parking lot work since that portion of the project is expected to exceed $15,000. At the time of application, applicants should explain their organizations process for obtaining bids and may be required to show documentation should the grant be awarded.

5. How will my application be evaluated?

Proposals are reviewed by a committee comprised of representatives from the Land Trust Alliance, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, individuals with expertise in New York's land trust community, and the foundation/grant-making sector. All decisions of the review committee are final. Applicants are encouraged to discuss proposed project ahead of time with Alliance staff. Alliance staff may offer advice and coaching for projects but are unable to review draft applications before they are submitted.

All Conservation Partnership Program grants have general evaluation criteria as well as category specific criteria. Please see the Evaluation Criteria document for more details.

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

Once the Alliance has received the disbursement of state funds (typically March), applicants will receive notice of the status of their application (either recommended for funding or not recommended). Specific award amounts will not be released until the state holds its Conservation Partnership Program grants announcement in late April, usually during the state's Earth Week celebration. The announcement includes a press event to which all grantee land trusts (staff/ board members) are encouraged to attend.

Once the announcement has been made, grantees will receive an email indicating that a grant agreement has been posted and is ready to review and complete. All grant agreements must be submitted through the online application and reporting system.

Payment for **Capacity & Excellence and Stewardship & Resource Management** grants are released upon receipt of the signed grant agreement.

Payment for **Transaction** grants are released upon receipt of the signed grant agreement and proof that the transaction has closed.

Conservation Catalyst and Professional Development grant payments are released in equal installments. For two-year projects, the initial payment will be sent once the signed grant agreement has been received. Second and third installments (for three-year projects) are released with receipt of a satisfactory interim report.

Grant funds typically take about two weeks to be processed and mailed.

Using the Online Application and Reporting System

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

Conservation Partnership Program grant applications and reports are to be completed through our secure online grants portal. If you have applied for an NYSCPP grant in the past, then you probably already have an account. If you do not remember if you have an account, or if you have forgotten your username or password, please contact the Alliance.

Click here to access the NYSCPP Grants Portal.

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

If you have an account in the system and have used it to submit a previous application or report then you still have access to those documents when you log in.

Please note: the system is organized by user accounts, not organization accounts and you will only have access to those documents that were completed under your account.

3. 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.

4. I want to work on my application or report offline. Can I download the questions?

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.

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

Yes, simple click on upload again and select the new file. The original attachment will be replaced. You can also click on delete and then upload to select a new file.

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

For questions that are likely to require multiple document uploads, more than one upload box will be provided. If you find you have more documents than upload boxes available, you will need to merge documents together and then upload as one attachment, as only one file can be attached per upload box. If you try to upload more than one document per upload box, the first document will simply be replaced by the second one you try to upload.

If you are unsure how to combine documents into one file in order to attach them, there are several ways to do this:

- Print out all the documents you wish to attach, then scan them together into one document (Word/PDF)
- If you have Adobe Acrobat, you can merge your documents together (PDF)
- **Please do NOT use zip files as the documents will not display correctly when downloaded to a PDF.**
- For assistance with large file document uploads please contact the Alliance.

7. 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 final application, further edits cannot be made. If you have submitted your document in error, please contact the Alliance to have it sent back to draft for additional edits.

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

Click on “Application Packet” at the top of the screen. Be sure to save a copy of this PDF for your files!

Reporting, Scope of Work Changes and Extensions

1. 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 interim reports. Please refer to the Request for Proposals and your projects Grant Agreement (received when a grant has been awarded) for more information on reporting deadlines.

2. What do I need to include as documentation for deliverables?

Deliverable documentation will vary depending on the grant project being funded and the deliverables being produced. As a general rule of thumb, grantees should submit 2-3 documents max that reflect the work that has been completed. For example, if the main deliverable of the project was to develop a strategic plan, submit a copy of that plan. If the main deliverable was to hold a conference, submit copies of materials from the event such as flyers, programs, etc.

In the case of a project with multiple deliverables, or sizeable deliverables, such as multiple baselines reports or large scientific studies, just submit one as an example and/or a portion of the document such as an executive summary and table of contents.

If you are unsure what type of documentation to include for your project, please contact the Alliance.

3. 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 complete, accurate, and submitted on time. If the project is taking longer than expected and additional time is required to complete the deliverables and/or spend the grant and matching funds, an extension may be needed. See below for how to go about requesting an extension.

Please note: a formal extension request is only required if the project deliverables have not been completed or if grant/matching funds have not been spent by the end of the stated grant period. If you simply need a little extra time to complete the report due to unforeseen circumstances, please contact the Alliance. Repeatedly late, missing or incomplete reports may impact your land trust's eligibility to receive Conservation Partnership Program grants in the future.

4. Can I make changes to my original proposal after it has been funded?

The short answer to this question is yes, in certain circumstances the Alliance may consider allowing changes to the scope of work of a project as long as the changes are consistent with the original intent of the grant funded project. Conservation Partnership Program grant funds may not be transferred to an alternate project. If you anticipate needing to alter your scope of work, please contact the Alliance. Scope of work changes require Alliance (and in certain cases, New York State) approval.

5. What if the project cannot be completed or my land trust cannot spend all of the grant money awarded?

The Alliance recognizes that projects may come in under budget or be unable to be completed due to unforeseen circumstances. If this is the case for a project your land trust has received funding for, please contact the Alliance immediately and we will work with you on a case-by-case basis to either re-allocate or return funds if needed. **Please DO NOT return unspent grant funds without contacting the Alliance first.**

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

To request an extension, please contact the Alliance to have an Extension Request Form assigned to you to complete through the online grants portal. Extensions should be requested towards the end of the grant period for a particular project, but grantees are encouraged to be proactive and not wait until just before the reporting deadline or after the reporting deadline to make this request.

7. How long of an extension should I ask for?

Extensions are granted for 3, 6, 9 or 12 months. Projects often take longer than expected so we encourage grantees to be conservative in estimating the additional time that will be required. Subsequent extensions are discouraged and in the rare circumstances they are approved, may come with consequences such as a request to return all awarded grant funds at the end of the 2nd extension period if the project is still not complete.

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

A documented extension request will not negatively impact a land trust's standing for future Conservation Partnership Program funding. However, 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.

Contacting the Alliance

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