

Evaluation Criteria

2016-2017 New York State Conservation Partnership Program

Applications are reviewed by a committee comprised of representatives from the Land Trust Alliance, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York's land trust community, and the foundation/grant-making sector. All decisions of the review committee are final. The committee's decisions will be based on the following considerations, summarized as primary and secondary evaluation criteria. Please note that some criteria are general and some are specific to the grant category.

All Conservation Partnership Program Grant Categories

Primary Evaluation Criteria

- Project is aligned with the land trust's mission, goals, and strategic priorities.
- Project has well defined metrics, goals, and objectives.
- Project can be accomplished within the stated grant period.
- Project has a high likelihood of success.
- Land trust match is secure, well explained and verifiable.

Secondary Evaluation Criteria

- Land trust demonstrates a high level of competence, accountability, and due diligence, including satisfactory completion of previously awarded NYSCPP projects and final performance reports.
- Project and outcomes are largely dependent on NYSCPP investment.
- Land trust is accredited or shows intent to become accredited within the next 3 years.
- Project advances broader community needs, programs, and objectives.
- Project acreage and/or relation to other protected areas (Catalyst and Transaction).
- Creates, enhances, or facilities access for outdoor recreation or other appropriate use by the public.
- Land trust match is greater than minimum required

Capacity & Excellence Grants

- Project aids in the implementation of specific Land Trust Standards & Practices and/or compliance with accreditation requirements.
- Project will develop systems or practices that build organizational capacity and effectiveness and are likely to be sustained beyond the grant period.
- Project is likely to increase the pace of land conservation in the land trust's service area and supports statewide environmental priorities such as those referenced in the [New York State Open Space Plan](#), [Statewide Forest Resource Assessment & Strategy](#) and/or [New York State Wildlife Action Plan](#).
- Applicant demonstrates sufficient organizational capacity and commitment to complete the proposed grant-funded activities.

Professional Development Grants

- Convincing demonstration of need for new and/or expanded staff capacity, clear description of expected outcomes, and a vision for how enhanced professional capacity will significantly impact the organization, leading to a stronger land trust.
- Likelihood that investment in professional capacity will achieve stated objectives.
- Extent to which project builds on existing strengths, organizational achievements, and board commitment.
- Security of matching funds and strength of fundraising plan.
- Demonstrated commitment to sustaining the grant-funded position(s) beyond the grant period
- Likelihood that new and/or expanded staffing capacity will advance financial sustainability and dramatically enhance the organization's ability to conserve land, particularly in areas prioritized in the [New York State Open Space Plan](#), [Statewide Forest Resource Assessment & Strategy](#) and/or [New York State Wildlife Action Plan](#).
- Likelihood that new or expanded staff will assist in full implementation of Land Trust Standards and Practices and/or help prepare the organization for accreditation or renewal of accreditation.
- Soundness of the land trust's plan to provide training and professional development opportunities to new and/or expanded staff.

Conservation Catalyst Grants

- Project complements land protection strategies of the [New York State Open Space Plan](#), [New York Wildlife Action Plan](#), [Statewide Forest Resource Assessment & Strategy](#) or other local and regional protection plans.
- Demonstrated community and municipal support for the project as evidenced by letters of support, municipal resolution, etc.
- Project enables a partnership, collaboration, or community initiative involving other conservation partners, public and/or private that:
 - serves as a "catalyst" for local or regional open space protection;
 - builds community support for and involvement in land conservation;
 - advances an innovative model for collaboration, outreach, constituency-building, and/or community engagement in New York's land trusts;
 - advances climate smart initiatives, including efforts to integrate resilience and climate change science into conservation planning on a regional level.
- Applicant demonstrates sufficient organizational capacity and commitment to complete a complex multi-year project.

Transaction Grants

- Project complements land protection strategies of the [New York State Open Space Plan](#), [New York Wildlife Action Plan](#), [Statewide Forest Resource Assessment & Strategy](#) or other local and regional protection plans. Please cite and include highlighted pages or sections of relevant plan(s).
- Transaction has already closed or land trust can demonstrate with a high degree of certainty that the project will close within grant period.
- Demonstrated landowner, community and local government support for project as evidenced by letters of support.
- Degree to which the project:
 - conserves environmentally significant land and resources;
 - protects land within an assemblage of other protected lands;
 - demonstrates the public benefits of private land conservation;
 - creates, expands or improves access for public use and enjoyment of protected lands.
- Applicant demonstrates sufficient organizational capacity and commitment to managing conserved fee lands and monitoring conservation easements.