

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

Commission Member Position Description: Roles and Responsibilities

Approved July 2015

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Organization Mission

The mission of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (Commission) is to inspire excellence, promote public trust and ensure permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing land trust organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and that strive for continuous improvement.

Organization Description

The Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (Alliance), incorporated in 2006. It is a tax-exempt 509(a)(3) supporting organization of the Alliance.

Commission Description

The Commission is a board composed of volunteers who have substantial knowledge and experience in the management and conduct of land conservation programs and activities and includes commissioners who are distributed geographically throughout the United States. The Commission has two roles: a) governance of the organization, and b) participation in its programmatic work, particularly by participating in the review of land trusts applying for accreditation. The overarching goals of the Commission are to ensure that the accreditation process is consistent, fair, and credible, and that the accreditation program fosters continuous improvement of accredited land trusts and throughout the land conservation community.

The Role of the Commissioner in Governance

The Commission is a governance board, and together the commissioners have the following responsibilities in fulfilling this role.

- Establish the mission statement and strategic directions of the organization and evaluate progress toward their fulfillment, including providing an annual report to the Board of Directors of the Alliance.
- Develop and approve the policies that govern the organization.
- Develop and approve the requirements for awarding accreditation.
- Make final decisions on each accreditation and renewal application and oversee the use of the trademarked accreditation seal.
- Make decisions to address appeals of Commission decisions by applicant land trusts and to respond to complaints about accredited land trusts.
- Approve and oversee the annual operating budget in conjunction with the Alliance to ensure fiscal accountability.
- Recruit and vet qualified commissioner candidates and approve recommendations for

candidates for the Commission to be ratified by the Board of Directors of the Alliance.

- Hire and supervise the Executive Director; evaluate them and consult with the President of the Alliance as part of the evaluation.
- Provide recommendations to the Alliance regarding revisions to *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and to the indicator elements for the accreditation program.
- Act in compliance with the Commission's bylaws and the operating agreements made between the Commission and the Alliance.

The Role of the Commissioner in Programmatic Work

Management of programmatic work of the organization is conducted by staff, led by the executive director. Commissioners participate with staff in many aspects of this programmatic work and do so under supervision by the staff. The following are the principal ways in which commissioners provide programmatic assistance.

- Participate on at least one of the organization's committees.
- Advise on the development of programmatic procedures through the relevant committee.
- Serve as a peer reviewer of applications for accreditation and participate with staff in the reviews of 4-8 applications per year, primarily through telephone discussions or very rarely, by visiting the site of the applicant land trust, and present the results of the review to the Commission at its decision-making meetings.
- Help develop and implement a program of communications, promotion and outreach around land trust accreditation.
- Provide technical expertise and/or support to staff as part of compliance confirmation process or to the review team during the review process, as needed.

Additional Expectations for Commissioners

- Commit to at least one three-year term of service.
- Participate in commissioner orientation and training.*
- Act as ambassadors of the organization to broaden public knowledge about and appreciation for the accreditation of land trusts.
- Strictly abide by the confidentiality and conflict of interest policies and the standard of conduct.
- Provide about 200 hours per year of commissioner volunteer service.**
- Attend two in-person meetings of the Commission.***
- Attend by video conference the other meetings of the Commission.
- Attend in-person the Commission meeting if one occurs at Rally and if attending Rally for other reasons.
- Prepare for each meeting by reviewing all advance materials.

Legal Duties for Commissioners

Above all, Commissioners shall discharge their duties in good faith and in keeping with the duties of care, loyalty and obedience as defined by federal law and the laws of the District of Columbia and applicable states as summarized below.

- Duty of Care: be familiar with the Commission's finances and activities and take reasonable

care in making decisions concerning the organization.

- Duty of Loyalty: act in the best interests of the Commission and abide by the conflict of interest policy's requirements for disclosure and recusal.
- Duty of Obedience: ensure that the Commission complies with applicable laws and regulations, its mission and its internal governance documents and policies.

Key Qualifications of Commissioners

- Substantial knowledge and experience in one or more of following: conservation land trusts or government agencies involved in land conservation, foundations that support land conservation, nonprofit organization management, or specific knowledge related to the needs of the land trust accreditation program (e.g., legal, financial, or public sector expertise).
- Experience with, or willingness to learn about, similar accreditation or certification programs.
- Collegiality, tact, diligence, and willingness to engage in complex and rigorous discussions of the commissioners and staff with the best of intentions and good spirits.

*Commissioner training consists of a half-day in-person orientation, attendance at a Commission meeting, a training video conference call, and shadowing an application review.

**Commissioners review applications as part of a review team; individual reviews are completed by each commissioner on their own schedule and take concentrated blocks of time. Review teams and committees meet by phone during business hours. Commissioners may also, but very rarely, lead an applicant site visit. There is variability in number of hours, number of applications, and number of review team meetings depending on the review experience of the commissioner, the preparedness of the applicant, and the number of applicants under consideration at any one time.

***Commissioner service includes attending two multi-day Commission meetings each year. Travel expenses to Commission meetings (although not to Rally) are generally covered by the Commission per its expense reimbursement policy. There can be significant variability in number of days per month depending on committee assignments and additional volunteer assignments that become available.