



MASSACHUSETTS
LAND TRUST
COALITION

Advancing Conservation Excellence

In Massachusetts

Information Session: April 9, 2025

Agenda

- Introductions
- Program overview
- Organizational assessment packages
- Application process
- Questions



OUR MISSION

The Land Trust Alliance's mission is to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America. We accomplish this by empowering and mobilizing land trusts in communities across America to conserve land — and connect people to the land — for the benefit of all.



MASSACHUSETTS LAND TRUST COALITION

MLTC advances land conservation across the Commonwealth by providing education, tools, networking opportunities, and advocacy to over 140 land trusts and their partners.

Resources include:

- Monthly eNews
- Listserv
- Topical networking conversations
- Multi-session learning collaboratives
- Seminars
- Annual conference
- Job Board
- Service provider directory... and more!

Visit <https://massland.org>

The background of the slide features a dark teal color with a pattern of white, wavy, topographic-style contour lines. Some lines are solid, while others are dashed, creating a sense of depth and movement.

What is Advancing Conservation Excellence?

Advancing Conservation Excellence

- A multi-year partnership between the Land Trust Alliance and Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
- An effort to provide support and resources to the land trust community in Massachusetts



Program goals

- Elevate capacity and impact
- Promote best practices
- Nurture sustainable organizations
- Fortify a resilient and enduring land trust community



Discovery process

- How did LTA and MLTC determine the program elements?
 - Collaborative needs assessment process
 - Inviting feedback from the land trust community



Program elements

- Leadership Development
- Organizational Assessments, Implementation Grants, and Coaching Support
- Trainings
- Targeted Micro-Grant Program





Organizational assessment packages

Who is eligible to participate?

- Land trusts that
 - Operate in Massachusetts
 - Are members of the Alliance and/or MLTC.



Selected candidates:

- Participate in a tailored organizational assessment
- Receive a list of priority action items
- Become eligible and apply for up to \$10,000 in implementation grant funding
- Participate in quarterly coaching calls



Four types of assessments to choose from

**Organizational
Capacity
Assessment**

**Terrafirma
Eligibility
Assessment**

**Requirements
Manual
Assessment**

**Land Trust
Standards and
Practices
Assessment**



Organizational Capacity Assessment

- Explores three main areas:
 - Strategy and Impact
 - Financial Sustainability
 - Management and Leadership
- Board and staff participate in online assessment; then ad-hoc work group is engaged
- Land trust fee: \$250



“”

“[The assessment process] provided some ideas for easy ways to bring board members along with the work being done already. It reinforced a major capacity gap that we've been talking about addressing but also pointed out some subtle gaps that were not on our radar.”

Land Trust Executive Director

Land Trust Standards and Practices

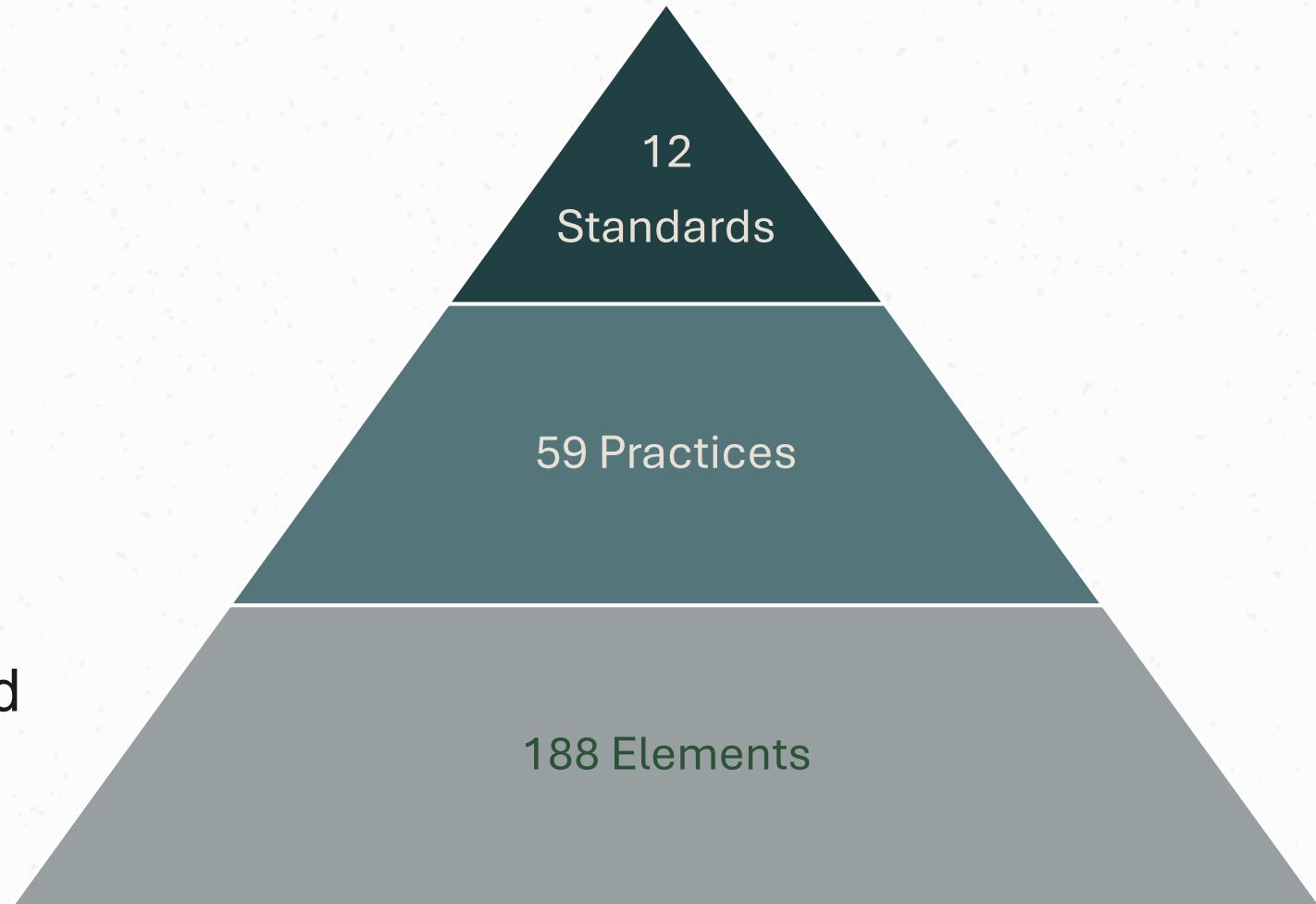
- Ethical and technical guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust
- “Best practices”
- But, WHY?
 - Maintain community’s strength, credibility and effectiveness
 - Surest way to lasting conservation



Land Trust Standards and Practices

Organized into 12 Standards:

- Standards 1-7: Organizational Strength
- Standards 8-12: Specific to land trusts



Land Trust Standards and Practices Assessment

- Better understand Land Trust Standards and Practices
- Better understand the extent to which your organization is meeting them
- Land trust fee: \$1,200



“”

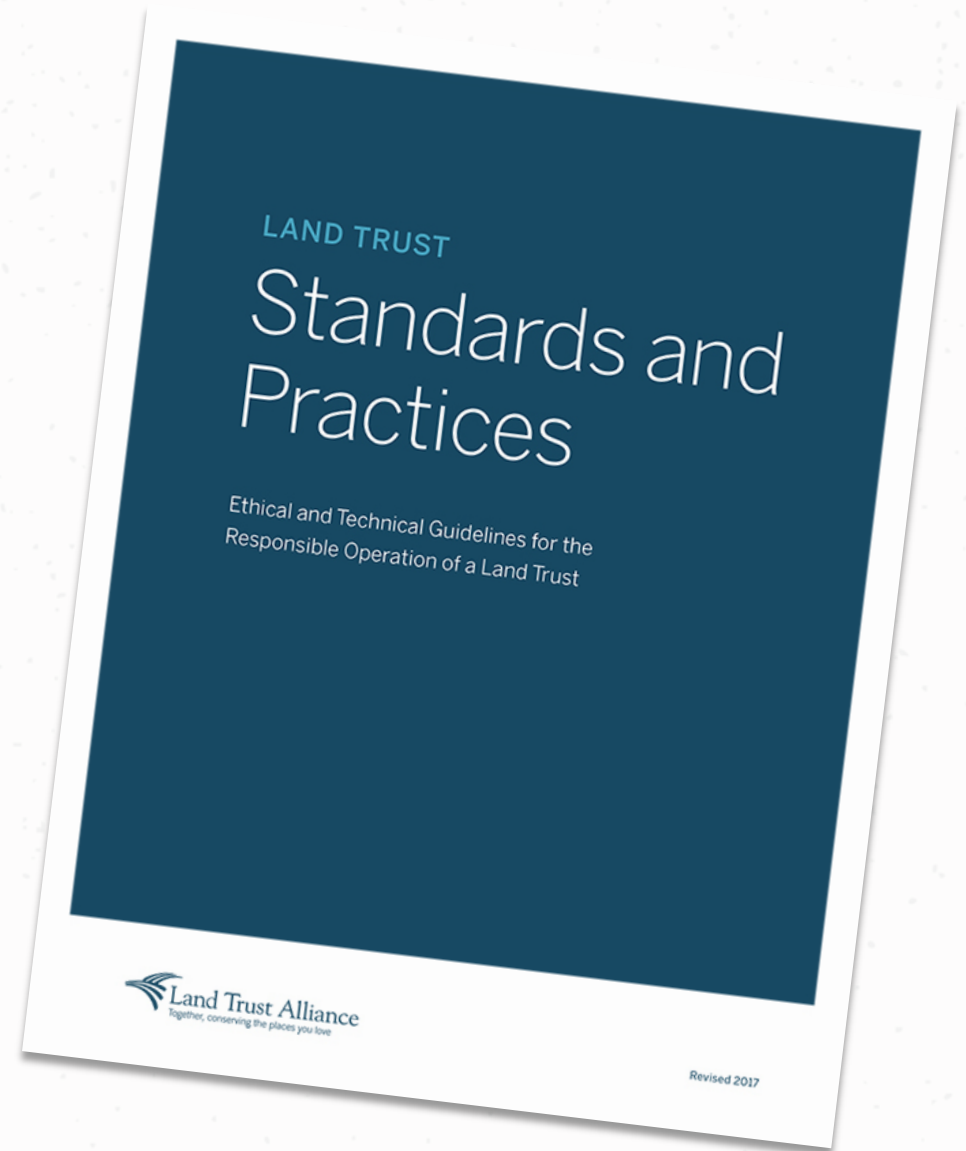
“The LT S&P assessment was valuable for our organization – it allowed our staff and board to fully understand our systems and processes, enabled us to chart a course of action, and increased our confidence in the organization’s long-term ability to protect and steward land.”

David Brant

Executive Director, Aspetuck Land Trust(CT)

Land Trust Standards and Practices

- Accreditation indicator element
- Terrafirma enrollment prerequisite
- ▲ Required for both



Terrafirma

- Insures the costs of upholding conservation easements and fee lands when they have been violated or are under legal attack



“”

“We have only three easements so violations are rare but devastating when they occur; it makes sense to have a collective fund and nationwide experts to call on for help.”

Larry Lunden

Land Management Chairman, Great Meadows Conservation Trust (CT)

Terrafirma Eligibility Assessment

- Better understand Terrafirma insurance eligibility requirements
- Better understand the extent to which your organization is meeting the requirements
- Land trust fee: \$300



Accreditation

- Voluntary process to demonstrate implementation of Land Trust Standards and Practices
- Rigorous review process to demonstrate fiscal accountability, strong organizational leadership, sound transactions and lasting stewardship

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance



- SOUND FINANCES
- ETHICAL CONDUCT
- RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE
- LASTING STEWARDSHIP

www.landtrustaccreditation.org



MASSACHUSETTS

- Ashby Land Trust ◇
- Berkshire Natural Resources Council
- Buzzards Bay Coalition and its affiliate, Acushnet River Reserve ◇
- Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust ◇
- Groton Conservation Trust ◇
- Hilltown Land Trust ◇
- Kestrel Land Trust ◇
- Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust ◇
- Massachusetts Audubon Society ◇
- Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust ◇◇
- New England Forestry Foundation
- Sheriff's Meadow Foundation ◇
- Sudbury Valley Trustees ◇◇
- Wareham Land Trust ◇



◇ INDICATES FIRST RENEWAL | ◇◇ INDICATES SECOND RENEWAL

“”

“Going through the accreditation renewal process continues to improve our organizational strategies, strengthen our policies and procedures. Accreditation also helps us become more effective and efficient in our work by providing a mechanism for self-evaluation and improvement.

Accreditation has demonstrated to our partners, supporters, landowners, and most importantly our donors, that we follow rigorous standards that ensure we steward land and financial resources properly and effectively.”

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (NY)





Requirements Manual Assessment

- Better understand the requirements for Accreditation
- Better understand the extent to which your organization is meeting the requirements
- Land trust fee: \$600



“”

“Land Trust Alliance Commission accreditation has long been talked about in our organization but there has never been a plan for getting to a point where we felt we could apply. We feel we have that plan now.”

Kacy Bailey

Former Executive Director, Western Foothill Land Trust (ME)



The application process

MASSACHUSETTS ADVANCING CONSERVATION EXCELLENCE

Organizational Assessments, Implementation Grants and Support

Selected land trusts will have the opportunity to participate in one of four types of assessments. After the assessment, each land trust will receive a list of priority action items and become eligible for an Implementation Grant to address those priorities. Prior to receiving the Implementation Grant funding, participating land trusts must submit an application detailing the work they plan to undertake with the grant support. Along with the grant funding, land trusts will participate in quarterly coaching calls.

Explore the Land

Program elements

Participating organizations will each receive the following as part of a comprehensive package.



Organizational assessment

Land trusts are invited to apply for a comprehensive organizational assessment tailored to their specific needs and interests. After the assessment, each land trust will receive a list of priority action items and become eligible for an implementation grant to address those priorities. Prior to receiving the implementation grant funding, participating land trusts must submit an application detailing the work they plan to undertake with the grant support.

Assessment options	+
Eligibility	+
Timeline	+
Apply	+

Chart of the assessment options

- [Detailed chart available](#)
 - Goal
 - Approach
 - Commitment
 - Deliverable

Assessment options				
	ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT	TERRAFIRMA ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT	REQUIREMENTS MANUAL ASSESSMENT	LAND TRUST STANDARDS AND PRACTICES ASSESSMENT
What is the goal of the assessment?	This assessment will result in a better understanding of the organization's strengths, challenges, gaps and opportunities for strengthening the organization, exploring three main areas: Strategy and Impact, Financial Sustainability, and Management and Leadership	This assessment will help land trusts better understand Terrafirma eligibility requirements and the extent to which their organization is meeting them.	This assessment will help land trusts better understand the requirements for Accreditation and the extent to which their organization is meeting them.	This assessment will help land trusts better understand Land Trust Standards and Practices and the extent to which their organization is meeting them.

Timeline for assessments



Selection Criteria

We are looking for applicants who demonstrate:

- The time and ability to fully participate in all aspects of the assessment package, including the assessment, grant, and coaching,
- A history of impactful conservation outcomes in their community,
- A desire to become a more sustainable organization that is thriving and can steward its lands in perpetuity, and
- A commitment to advancing *Land Trust Standards and Practices* within the organization.



A note about Land Trust Standards and Practices

We do not expect that organizations are fully implementing *Land Trust Standards and Practices* at the time of application.

The intention of this opportunity is to help advance the adoption and implementation of these practices.

A land trust could meet this criterion by:

- Describing a board adoption resolution that shows its commitment to adopting the *Land Trust Standards and Practices* as the organization's guiding principles or
- Describing particular standards or practices the land trust wishes to advance within their organization through the participation in this program.



Implementation grants

- Grants of up to \$10,000 to support action items
- Applications considered on a rolling basis and available upon the completion of the assessment process and grant application acceptance
- Grants will be available starting as early as October 15, 2025
- Grant reports will be due 12 months from the award date
- Coaching – quarterly check ins





Questions?

Jen Plowden

New England Senior Program Manager

Land Trust Alliance

jplowden@lta.org

(978) 595-3871