Request for Applications
2026-2027 New York State Conservation Partnership Program

The Land Trust Alliance (Alliance), with support from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is pleased to announce the twenty-third round of competitive land trust grants through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (CPP). This successful public-private partnership is funded through the state Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and administered by the Alliance, in coordination with the DEC.

Throughout its history, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded 1,325 grants totaling more than $36.7 million to over 90 land trusts working across New York and has leveraged at least $36.8 million in local matching funds, helping land trusts conserve over 50,000 acres of farmland, wildlife habitat, recreational areas and urban open spaces.

Up to $2.7 million in funding is available through the 2026-2027 grants round. Grant funding is contingent upon the availability and receipt of state funds by the Alliance. If awarded, any expenses incurred prior to the execution of a grant agreement will be made at the risk of the grantee. Grant awards will be announced in the spring of 2027. **The deadline for all applications is Friday, Jan. 15, 2027 by 5 p.m. Eastern.**

Visit the Conservation Partnership Program webpage for more information including:

- The link to our online application and reporting system to start your application.
- Virtual roundtable schedule and links.
- Evaluation criteria.
- Answers to frequently asked questions.
- Summaries and highlights of previously awarded projects.
- Links to important resources including the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan and other documents to help you craft a compelling proposal.

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to attend a roundtable and make an appointment with New York Program Manager, Katrina Howey, to discuss project ideas prior to submitting applications.

Eligibility Requirements

- The applicant is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

- Applicants' primary mission is the conservation and/or stewardship of private lands. Organizations that are exclusively focused on advocacy, education or the conservation and stewardship of public lands, e.g. state-owned lands, are not eligible.

- Applicant has formally adopted the Alliance's Land Trust Standards and Practices (revised 2017) by submitting a board resolution to the Land Trust Alliance. This must be completed before submitting a grant application

- The applicant's service area and/or project site are located within the State of New York. Grant funds may only be used for projects, programs and activities within the State of New York.

- Applicants are not required to be members of the Land Trust Alliance to apply for or receive grant funding, however, non-member land trusts are encouraged to learn more about the benefits of becoming an Alliance member.

- Applicants are not required to be accredited to apply for or receive grant funding, however, accreditation status (including an applicant's demonstrated intention to prepare for accreditation) is an important factor in the grant evaluation process.

Matching Funds

A minimum 25% match is required for all Conservation Partnership Program Grants. The match is based on the total project budget, with the grant funds covering up to 75% and the applicant match covering at least 25%. Depending on the grant category, the required match may be cash or a combination of cash and in-kind. Cash match must be from non-state and non-federal funds.

Source and status of matching funds must be explained at the time of application. If awarded, verifiable documentation of the match is required before grant funds are disbursed. Please refer to the grant category descriptions below for specific matching requirements.

Grant Categories

Conservation Partnership Program Grants are available in five categories as described below. Land trusts may apply for more than one Conservation Partnership Program Grant (including more than one grant in the same category). Grant funding may only be used for eligible project expenses. Eligible use of grant funds includes project-related consultants and contractors, project-related staff and other direct project-related expenses.

Grant funding may not be used for:

- general operating support,
- branded promotional materials,
- fees for Alliance training and events,
- accreditation fees,
- insurance premiums,
- land or easement direct acquisition costs,
- property taxes or other state/local/federal taxes,
- endowments or reserve funds,
- buildings and heavy equipment,
- project costs incurred outside of the grant period (unless an extension has been approved).

Capacity & Excellence Grants

Capacity & Excellence Grants of up to **$50,000** are available to support land trust efforts to implement *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. Funding in this category is also intended to help land trusts build and sustain organizational capacity, prepare for leadership transitions (staff and board), investigate shared services or merger, address climate change, develop and enhance community programs and services and advance efforts towards national accreditation or accreditation renewal. All applications in this category must refer specifically to the Land Trust Standards and Practices.

A 25% match is required, up to 50% of which may be in-kind. The grant period for Capacity & Excellence Grants is 18 months, from **January 1, 2027 to July 1, 2028**.

Professional Development Grants

Professional Development Grants of up to **$100,000** are available for land trusts looking to professionalize and strengthen programs and services by adding permanent staff. These highly competitive grants are intended to support the creation and/or expansion of positions deemed necessary for the organization to significantly enhance its land conservation, stewardship, community outreach, education, research, climate change response, fundraising and/or administrative capabilities.

Professional Development Grants may be used for permanent full-time, part-time or seasonal employment. Contractors and term (non-permanent) positions are not eligible for this funding. Please note, if requesting funds to expand a position or positions, grant funds may only cover the costs of the salary and benefits increase for the expanded position(s). Grant-funded positions are expected to be sustained by the land trust beyond the grant period.

A 25% cash match commitment is required. Applicants may choose either a "two-year" or "three-year" grant period as defined below:

- Grant period for two-year (27-month) option – **January 1, 2027 to March 31, 2029**
- Grant period for three-year (39-month) option – **January 1, 2027 to March 31, 2030**

Conservation Catalyst Grants

Conservation Catalyst Grants of up to **$100,000** are available to support projects that will "catalyze" conservation by fostering collaboration and community engagement to increase public support for either the protection and stewardship of environmentally significant lands, or other related public purposes that bring together communities and organizations. Proposals should connect the goals of these collaborations to specific priorities identified in the New York State Open Space Plan and/or other local, regional or statewide land protection or comprehensive plans.

Proposals that will expand and support land trust engagement in local and regional conservation partnerships and community-centered conservation that will further the connections between people and the environment and help to build stronger, more inclusive communities are encouraged.

Some examples include: organizing a community-wide effort to protect a specific property that is identified in the New York State Open Space Plan; undertaking a town-wide park clean-up program with multiple partners and stakeholders, where the municipality's Comprehensive Plan identifies parks as an important resource for its residents; or, establishing a panel workshop to help farmers better understand options to protect their farms in a community that has identified this as a priority in a Farmland Protection or Comprehensive Plan. These are illustrative examples and not an exhaustive list.

Conservation Catalyst projects must have clearly defined outcomes and deliverables and should involve a measure of innovation for the land trust, engage multiple partners and stakeholders and directly advance the land trust's mission, strategic goals and programs. Successful projects should also advance partners' goals and missions. Letters of Support that demonstrate partner commitment and readiness to participate are required.

A 25% match is required, up to 50% of which may be in-kind. The grant period for Conservation Catalyst Grants is 27 months, from **Jan. 1, 2027 to March 31, 2029**.

Stewardship & Resource Management Grants

Stewardship & Resource Management Grants of up to $100,000 are available for land trusts looking to make substantial capital investments in public access improvements and on-the-ground stewardship of conserved properties. Funding cannot be used for stewardship endowments; however, project-related contributions to stewardship funds or endowments may be counted as match.

Stewardship Grants: Funding to support "shovel ready" projects that will result in resilient and durable, on-the-ground impacts. For example, proposals to build universal public access trails and facilities, add amenities such as parking and outdoor gathering areas, improve signage or otherwise improve the visitor experience are encouraged. Successful applications may include planning, provided the on-the-ground improvements can be completed by the end of the grant period. Projects that require a more extensive planning period should submit a Capacity & Excellence Grant proposal and consider a Stewardship Grant only once the project is ready to proceed.

Resource Management Grants: Funding to address non-recurring or new approaches to recurring stewardship and resource management needs. Projects that address habitat improvement and restoration, invasive species management, water quality, enhancing forest and/or soil health are encouraged. We are especially interested in projects that will enable conserved lands to sequester and store more carbon, bring climate change adaptation principles into land management decisions, welcome new audiences, protect drinking water

and/or provide resilient habitat for wildlife and species of special concern and greatest conservation need.

A 25% match is required; up to 50% of which may be in-kind. The grant period for Stewardship & Resource Management Grants is 18 months, from **January 1, 2027 to July 1, 2028**.

Transaction Grants

Transaction Grants of up to $75,000 are available for new conservation easement and fee-acquisition projects that result in strategic, permanent protection of environmentally significant lands in New York. Projects that create, enhance and promote access for outdoor recreation for all New Yorkers and appropriate use by the public are encouraged.

Projects should advance publicly supported open space priorities such as those identified in the New York State Open Space Plan and/or other local, regional or statewide land protection plans.

The Alliance encourages projects identified in strategic conservation plans targeting climate-resilient resources and landscapes.

Grant funds are intended to cover indirect transaction costs including, but not limited to, project-related staff and/or contractor expenses, legal fees, surveys, baseline documentation, land trust appraisals, stewardship/management plans and design and installation of public access improvements associated with the purchase, bargain-sale or donation of a conservation easement or fee property.

Transaction grant funds may not be used for land or easement acquisition costs. Such project-related investments should be highlighted in the narrative.

A 25% cash match commitment is required. In accordance with best practices, at least 50% of the cash match commitment must be allocated to a designated stewardship fund, legal defense fund or other board-designated reserve or endowment for the purposes of long-term land management, stewardship and enforcement costs of conservation properties and easements. The grant period for Transaction Grants is 36 months, from **January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2027**. This includes a two-year "look-back" period (January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2026) to allow for applicants to capture costs already incurred leading up to closing.

Important: Preference will be given to transactions that are closed at the time of application (prior to December 2026). Transaction Grant funds will not be released until the conservation transaction is closed, recorded and documented (e.g. executed purchase agreement, conservation easement or fee conveyance) to the satisfaction of the Alliance. Transactions not expected to close in 2025 or early 2026 are best suited for a future grant cycle.

Distribution of Funds and Reporting

Capacity & Excellence Grants – grant funds are disbursed in full with the receipt of a signed grant agreement and verification that matching funds are in-hand. Final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period or no later than July 31, 2028.

Conservation Catalyst Grants – grant funds are disbursed in two installments (of equal value). The first installment is disbursed with receipt of the signed grant agreement and verification that matching funds for at least the first year of the grant period are in- hand. The second installment will be released upon receipt of a satisfactory interim report and verification that remaining matching funds are in-hand. Interim reports are due by April 30, 2028. Final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period or no later than April 30, 2029.

"Two-Year" Professional Development Grants – grant funds are disbursed in two installments (of equal value). The first installment is disbursed with receipt of the signed grant agreement and verification that matching funds for at least the first year of the grant period are in- hand. The second installment will be released upon receipt of a satisfactory interim report and verification that remaining matching funds are in-hand. Interim reports are due by April 30, 2028. Final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period or no later than April 30, 2029. **Note, although the grant period is longer than two years, to receive the second installment, grantees must be able to show a full year of employment when submitting the interim report for the payment to be released.**

"Three-Year" Professional Development Grants – grant funds are disbursed in three installments (of equal value). The first installment is disbursed with receipt of the signed grant agreement and verification that matching funds for at least the first year of the grant are in hand. The second and third installments will be released upon receipt of a satisfactory interim report (due April 30, 2028 and April 30, 2029) and verification that match is in-hand for years two and three, respectively. Final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period or no later than April 30, 2030. **Note, although the grant period is longer than three years, to receive the second installment, grantees must be able to show a full year of employment when submitting the interim report for the payment to be released and a full two years of employment when submitting the second interim report for the payment to be released.**

Stewardship & Resource Management Grants – grant funds are disbursed in full with the receipt of a signed grant agreement and verification that matching funds are in-hand. Final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period or no later than July 31, 2028.

Transaction Grants – grant funds are disbursed in full with the receipt of a signed grant agreement, verification that matching funds are in-hand, and proof that the transaction has closed. **Please note, that if your transaction grant project includes multiple parcels or has both a fee and easement component, all must be closed and recorded and proof provided to receive payment.** Final reports are due 30 days after the end of the grant period or no later than January 30, 2028.