

A review team of a Commission staff member and one or more commissioners reviews each complete accreditation application in detail. The majority of the information evaluated by the review team is from the applicant; additional information may be provided by the public and still other information may be the result of research conducted by the Commission's review team. This additional information may relate to the review of more than one accreditation indicator. Relying on multiple sources of information helps ensure credible decisions that maintain the integrity of the accreditation program.

[accordion id="a4" heading="Commission Research"]

The review team may [conduct research](#) regarding an applicant. This research may include Web or print searches, documented interviews with individuals knowledgeable about the land trust's activities, informal visits to conservation properties and/or review of other data. The Commission is well aware that not all news accounts, websites or other reports are accurate or complete, thus affirmative disclosure and explanation in the application will assist the Commission in its work.

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[accordion id="a5" heading="Application Review"]

The review team examines all of the information it has to determine if the applicant is implementing *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and meeting the accreditation requirements. The review team not only examines an applicant's written policies (for example, a conflict of interest policy or amendment policy), but also looks for evidence that the policy and accreditation indicators are actually followed (such as by reviewing board meeting minutes from the last time the applicant managed a conflict of interest).

The review team may find the applicant is meeting each accreditation indicator, or it may find that it needs more information and/or that the applicant needs to take corrective action to be in compliance.

- **In making its findings, the review team keeps flexibility in mind.** We are aware that one size does not fit all in land conservation and that there is a wide diversity of approaches that land trusts use to implement the standards. For example, an all-volunteer organization with a board that meets monthly and discusses each project in detail will have different evidence of board review of projects than a staffed organization with an active land committee. Each organization will need to provide evidence of project review, but the Commission expects their approaches to be very different. Commissioners reflect the diversity of the land trust community and use their extensive knowledge to help ensure that applicants are meeting the accreditation indicators and that the review is flexible and practical.
- **The Commission uses a variety of systems to ensure consistency** in the review process including having staff and commissioners serve on a variety of review teams, using the *Requirements Manual* as a reference, and having feedback systems between staff, commissioners, Commission committees and the full Commission. For more information see the Commission's [Consistency Checks](#) diagram.

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[accordion id="88" heading="Applicant Conference Call"]

The review team will hold one phone call with the applicant to give the applicant an opportunity to answer questions the review team may have about the application.

While the review team may have questions related to a particular practice, it does not necessarily mean that the applicant needs to provide additional information or take further action! In many cases, only verbal clarification of information submitted is needed.

- This call will be scheduled in advance at a date and time that works for all parties.
- Applicants will receive a detailed call agenda approximately one week prior to the scheduled call detailing the questions the review team would like to discuss.
- Once the call is scheduled, the applicant may want to block some time about six days prior to the scheduled date to review the call agenda and assign the appropriate people to join the call and respond to specific questions. Participation from board members and staff (if any) is strongly encouraged and appreciated.
- Please note that the call will be recorded to ensure the Commission's written notes are accurate. The recording is not retained as a permanent file.

Site Visit: The Commission reserves the right to use [site visits](#) as a check on the document-based process and to verify organizational practices or land conservation work on the ground. *No site visits are planned at this time.*

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[accordion id="a7" heading="Additional Information Request"]

If the review team still needs additional information from an applicant or the applicant must take corrective action before a final decision can be made on the application, the applicant will receive an additional information request (AIR) explaining the additional information/action needed. If applying with related entities, any additional information requests for the related

entities will be included in the one Additional Information Request described above. Applicants will generally be provided with one to three months to respond to the AIR.

The elapsed time between the application due date and receiving a formal “Additional Information Request” letter from the Commission can range from 6 weeks to four months. Reviews take place according to an internal schedule developed after all applications have been submitted for a round; the location of your land trust in that docket determines when the review takes place and when the AIR is sent. We will give you a specific timeline once our review of your application has begun. If you need to know sooner, please contact the Commission.

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[accordion id="a8" heading="Commission Decision"]

The Commission makes final decisions on each complete application based on the review team’s evaluation of the applicant’s compliance, during its accredited term, with Land Trust Standards and Practices and published program requirements.

The Commission can make one of three decisions at the conclusion of the first-time application process: award accreditation, table an application (in limited circumstances) pending further information, or *not* award accreditation. For more information about each of these, [click here](#).

A land trust may appeal a decision to not award accreditation by following the Commission's [Appeals Policy and Procedures](#).

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