

Land Trust Accreditation Impact Evaluation

Appendix C: Landowner Survey

May 3, 2018

Overview of Document

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Summary

Purpose and Approach

A central question of this evaluation is whether the accreditation program has had an effect on public confidence in land trusts. To seek an answer to this program, the evaluation surveyed public agencies and foundations with a stake in conservation

In an effort to round-out as much as possible the stakeholder perspective, an effort was made to survey landowners who had conserved their land with an accredited land trust

Landowners were asked about their familiarity with the accreditation program, their awareness of the fact that the land trust they worked with was accredited, and how they factored this information into their decision making

Importantly they were asked about the effect on their confidence that their land would be conserved in perpetuity

The survey was conducted in late March and early April 2018. It was emailed by accredited land trust survey respondents to landowners. 35 responses were received from landowners in 13 states

Key Results

1. The fact that a land trust is accredited matters to, and is highly valued by, landowners

- 83% of landowner respondents said that the fact that the land trust they worked with is accredited moderately or substantially increased their confidence that their land would be protected in perpetuity (66% substantially)
- 80% said that they considered accreditation when deciding to work with a land trust. Half of these respondents (41%) said accreditation was a major factor
- Three quarters of respondents said that if they were to work with a land trust again, they would seek out an accredited organization; 26% said they were unsure; none said they would not seek out an ALT

2. Familiarity with the national accreditation program is pervasive, yet soft. Only 20% of respondents were very familiar with accreditation; 60% were moderately familiar; one quarter were not at all familiar

3. Land trust promotion of their accredited status appears to be having an effect

- 9 in 10 respondents were aware that the land trust they worked with was accredited

Discussion

The accreditation program appears to have been successful in increasing landowner confidence in land trusts

Most respondents factored accreditation into their decision making

The results for confidence and factoring into decision making were nearly identical to that from other stakeholders

There would appear to be a major opportunity to increase familiarity with the accreditation program and its contents (what it is and what it is not)

Even though landowners may not be deeply familiar with the accreditation program, nearly all are aware that they were working with an accredited land trust – a reflection of the intensive efforts by land trusts to promote this status

The data has certain limitations. Resource, time constraints, and basic logistics limited our ability to conduct a comprehensive survey of conservation landowners. Landowners were reached through ALTs who took the ALT survey and agreed to forward a link to landowners they worked with. This could have introduced bias

Familiarity with and Awareness of Accreditation

Familiarity

About three-quarters of landowner respondents were somewhat or very familiar with the program to accredit land trusts. However, about 60% were just somewhat familiar

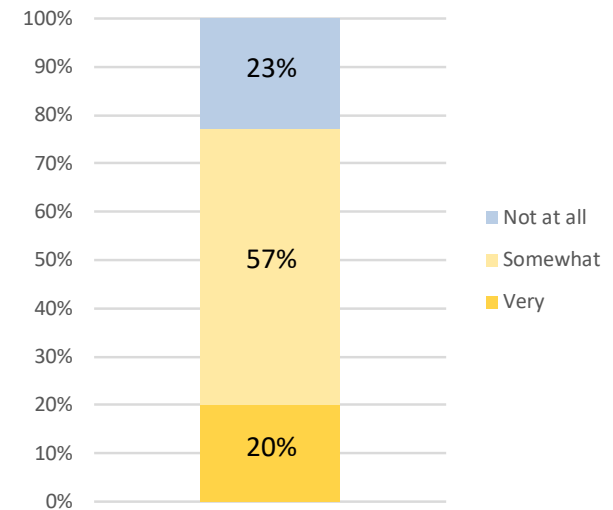
This aligns with a take-away from the stakeholder survey that there is a gap or incompleteness in the familiarity with the accreditation program that might be productively addressed

About a quarter of respondents were not at all familiar with the accreditation program

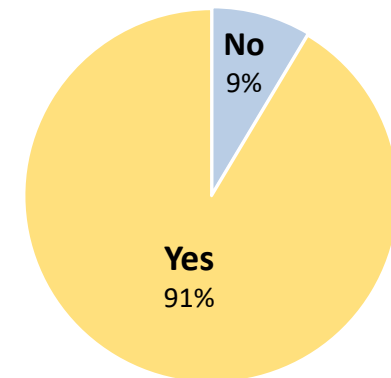
Awareness

Despite the relatively limited deep familiarity with the program to accredit land trusts nationally, nine in ten landowner respondents said they were aware of the accreditation status of the land trust they worked with

Landowner Familiarity with the Accreditation Program Generally



Landowner Awareness That Land Trust They Worked With Was Accredited



Extent Accreditation Was a Factor in Decision

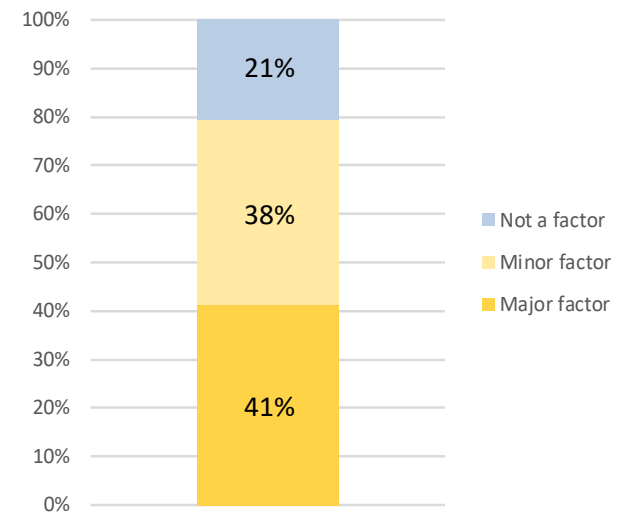
Accreditation as a Factor

About 80% of respondents said they considered accreditation when deciding to work with a land trust

This was split roughly evenly between those from whom it was a major factor, and those for whom it was a minor factor

One in five respondents said they did not consider accreditation

Extent Accredited Was a Factor In Deciding to Work With a Land Trust



Accreditation and Confidence in Perpetuity

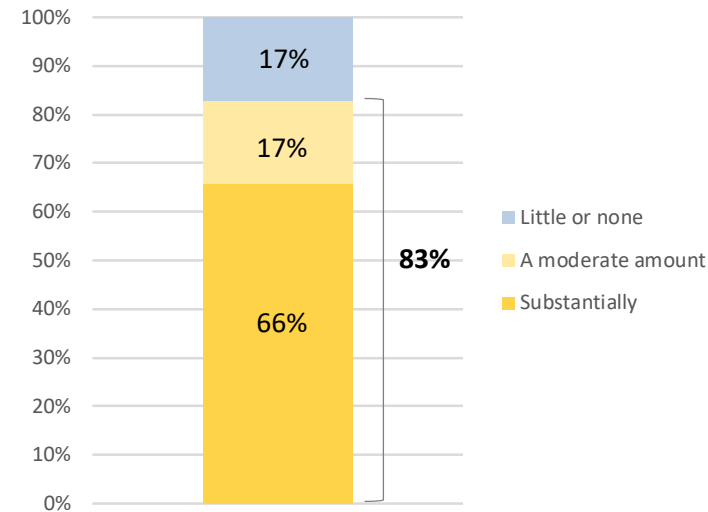
Confidence

More than 8 in 10 landowner respondents (83%) said that the fact that the land trust they worked with is accredited moderately or substantially increased their confidence that their land would be protected in perpetuity

Two thirds of respondents said this confidence increased substantially due to the fact the land trust they worked with is accredited

Fewer than one in five respondents said there was little or no effect on their confidence

Extent Status as Accredited Increases Confidence Land Will Be Protected in Perpetuity



Would Seek Accredited Land Trust Next Time

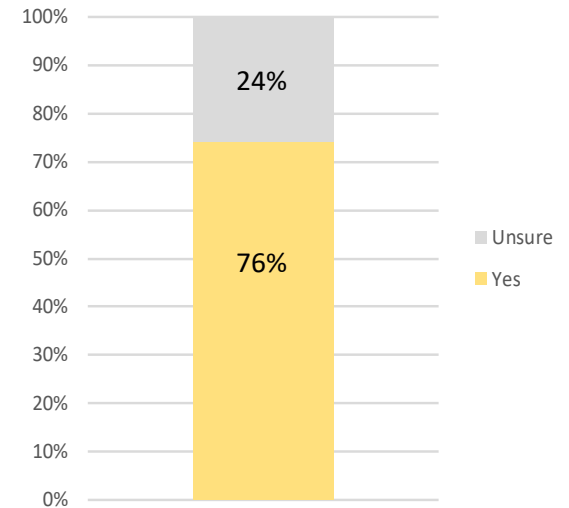
Next Time

Three quarters of respondents said that if they were to work with a land trust again, they would seek out an accredited organization

One in four said they were unsure

No respondents said they would not seek an accredited organization

If Working With Land Trust Again, Would Seek an Accredited Land Trust?



Open-Ended Comments

Comments related to why landowner considered accreditation as a factor

Accreditation is a painstaking, detailed process and attainment indicates high level of **competence and professionalism**.

It is important to know that the Land Trust has the professionalism, legal engagement, and ability to operate within the guidelines of the IRS program to **protect the trust** that has been established.

Having an impartial board reinforce our decision to work with [the land trust we worked with] gave us **more faith** in their promises and their seriousness. We were, after all, expecting to place this land in a conservation easement in perpetuity.

It shows me that the organization adheres to **standards** I believe in and that they are probably going to be around for a long time. This is very important when considering to work with any land trust.

By giving up the right to develop our property we wanted to make sure we went with a land trust that will be around for many years to come. By being accredited it gave us **peace of mind** that they met a minimum level of standards for the industry.

It's an important part of **trusting** a land trust, but I already trusted our Land Trust

The accreditation that land trusts receive means that they have they have demonstrated organizational strength, have a secure means of housing and retrieving important documents, and have to **ability to defend** the easement if it was ever contested.

Trust was not accredited when I put my land into that trust. **I am glad** it has gotten accredited since then.

When we began to work with them - they were not yet accredited - but **I am glad** that they now are- it will help them get grants that can be used for important projects on protected land.

When the transaction was done, the land trust was working to achieve accreditation, giving me confidence that the all-volunteer organization was **moving towards assuring** its sustainability and good stewardship of the land.

We would have placed our property with [the land trust we worked with] regardless, because we know the integrity of its leaders. However we **favor accreditation** in principle and welcome the prospect that they either have or will attain it.

If trust is accredited I know everything is **being done correctly**.

Open-Ended Comments

Additional thoughts on the value of accreditation

I was a co-founder of an all-volunteer, non-accredited land trust. We "merged" with an accredited land trust. The **difference is night and day.**

Part of the accreditation process involves working on **organization development.** This factor is very important for long range survival of the land trust.

I have **considerably more confidence** in the trust since it went through the accreditation process, a process that helped it smooth out many of the procedural problems of the past.

As a result of my confidence, I have been a continuing donor to the land trust and am currently **planning an additional major land bargain sale.**

Appendix: Profile of Respondents

Respondent Profile

Discussion

Responses were received from 35 landowners in 13 states

60 percent of respondents live in the East (Northeast, Southeast), and about 40% live in the Midwest or West

Respondents to Landowner Survey: By State

State	#Resp	%
CA	3	9%
CT	1	3%
GA	2	6%
KY	2	6%
MD	1	3%
MI	6	17%
NY	1	3%
RI	1	3%
SC	3	9%
TN	5	14%
VA	4	11%
WI	4	11%
WV	1	3%
(blank)	1	3%
Total	35	100%

Respondents to Landowner Survey: By Region

Region	#Resp	%
Northeast	4	11%
Southeast	17	49%
Midwest	10	29%
West	3	9%
(blank)	1	3%
Total	35	100%