



Conservation Partnership Program Year 1 Guidelines for Applicants

Background

Protected areas are internationally recognized as one of the most effective strategies for biodiversity conservation. Protected areas provide ecosystem services to communities, such as clean air and water, enhance resilience to the impacts of climate change (e.g., flooding, drought), and offer the benefits of nature to human health and well-being. Maintaining healthy natural ecosystems is a cost-effective way to support sustainable and livable communities, protect the environment, and advance economic development. Nature also underpins Ontario's reputation as a top destination in which to live, work and invest.

Conservation of Ontario's rich biodiversity is a shared responsibility. The Conservation Partnership program is a plan to conserve ecologically important natural areas and contribute to the government's climate change objectives. The Province committed in the Fall 2020 budget to partially match private contributions to the Conservation Partnership with the Recipient. The government is committed to strengthening conservation partnerships to preserve more areas of significant ecological importance, protect natural areas and promote the importance of healthy, natural spaces.

This investment in protected lands is an investment in Ontario's future and contributes to global area-based biodiversity targets. The Conservation Partnership will support the securement of new privately-owned protected areas and the restoration and management of those properties. Secured land will be privately owned. Lands will be managed with the primary objective of biodiversity conservation.

Introduction

This funding cycle represents year 1 of a four-year fund. These guidelines are for year 1 only. The current funding cycle has a focus on supporting projects that acquire and manage ecologically sensitive lands.

Application are being accepted in order to consider support for:

- Land acquisition – fee simple or conservation easement
- Associated costs of land acquisition.

In funding years 2 to 4, restoration and land management costs will also be eligible expenses on properties secured with funding from prior years.

A total of \$1,007,000 is available to be granted in this current funding cycle. This Program has received funding support from the Government of Ontario. Such support does not indicate endorsement by the Government of Ontario of the contents of this material.

1. Submission

Please thoroughly review:

- 1) OLTA CP Guidelines for Applicants
- 2) OLTA CP Application Form
- 3) OLTA CP Project Budget Spreadsheet
- 4) OLTA CP Year 1 Agreement Sample (coming soon)

Completed applications and all documentation are to be submitted electronically to admin@olta.ca by 9:00am on Monday, March 15, 2021. Please submit your application as a single PDF document file, plus separate budget spreadsheet and GIS files. The maximum file size is 10MB. Larger files may be submitted as multiple smaller files. Please contact the OLTA office if you have any problems or questions.

Land trust possible securements submitted to OLTA previously are also being considered under this year 1 funding round. Please submit an application for these projects, with information that has not yet been provided.

2. Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, an applicant must be:

- A Member of Ontario Land Trust Alliance in good standing with OLTA; and
- A land trust operating in Ontario.

If applicants are requesting funding for a project for which the eligible recipient is partnering with a non-eligible group, the following must accompany the application:

- 1) A partnership agreement between the parties specifying the roles and responsibilities of each organization for the project.
- 2) A letter to OLTA specifying which organization is responsible for the various costs, along with any other relevant information required to evaluate the project. **Note: only costs incurred by the eligible recipient will be considered.**

3. Project Eligibility

Organizations may submit up to a maximum of three applications with a total request between \$5,000 and \$400,000. Each project must be at least \$5,000 submitted on its own application. An eligible project must have a transaction closing date between January 1, 2021 and May 1, 2021. Project expenses must be incurred between January 1, 2021 and May 24, 2021.

A project may be defined as a parcel or grouping of parcels that may or may not share the same landowner and may consist of either conservation easement agreement or fee simple acquisition or a combination. Transaction types are purchases, donations and split receipts.

A project with one parcel or a group of parcels may have up to two individual landowners.

To be eligible, a project must meet **all** the following criteria:

- Have been identified as priorities through systematic conservation planning consistent with the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (2019);
- Contribute to connectivity of the existing protected and conserved areas network and other natural spaces, such as areas that contribute to structural or functional connectivity through natural linkages, buffers, infilling, or stepping stones; or areas identified as ecological corridors in strategic conservation plans;
- Meet, or are likely to meet, pan-Canadian standards for protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures as defined in the Pathway to Canada Target 1 Decision Support Tool (DST); and
- Have matching contributions at a rate of a 1.5 non-provincial investment for every dollar of provincial funds.

Applicants are required to complete a DST checklist as part of the application, to assist OLTA in determining whether a proposed project meets, or is likely to meet, pan-Canadian standards for protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. See the following link if you are interested in learning more about accounting for protected areas <https://www.conservation2020canada.ca/accounting>.

Conservation easement projects are only eligible for funding if a Baseline Documentation Report has been completed or will be completed at the end of the project. The Baseline Documentation Report must follow the Baseline Documentation Report (BDR) For Natural Heritage Properties and Natural Heritage Conservation Easement Agreements (2006) prepared by the Ontario Heritage Trust and Ontario Land Trust Alliance.

If for any reason the applicant wishes to transfer, assign, lease or otherwise dispose of all or any part of the parcels, the applicant must first obtain written consent in writing from OLTA. See Grant Recipient Agreement for details.

For every \$1 of Program funds awarded, a minimum of \$1.50 in matching funds from sources other than Ontario Government including Ontario Trillium Foundation, must be contributed to the project. Matching funds may include both cash and in-kind contributions. See Eligible Expenses for details on what expenses can be considered for the match.

Stewardship Endowment

Funded projects require a cash contribution to a stewardship endowment fund for the long-term stewardship of the lands. Funds from Ontario provincial government sources cannot be used for the stewardship endowment. Pre-existing funds in an endowment cannot be re-assigned/extended to cover this stewardship endowment fund requirement.

Projects must fund the stewardship endowment from other sources. Cash in reserve can be used to fund the stewardship endowment so long as these reserve funds were not in a stewardship reserve for already conserved properties.

The stewardship endowment contribution must be accounted for separately (meaning the stewardship funds cannot be pooled with general operations funding and the earnings must be

used to fund long-term stewardship of the property). Stewardship endowment funds may be pooled in an internally-restricted general stewardship reserve.

The amount of stewardship endowment required is determined by using the table below:

Value of Land or CEA	Stewardship Endowment Contribution Required
<i>Less than \$50,000</i>	<i>Minimum of \$5,000</i>
<i>>\$50,000</i>	<p><i>Note that a minimum of \$5,000 is required, regardless of which option is used to determine stewardship endowment contribution.</i></p> <p><i>There are 2 approaches to choose from:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1) Use the Stewardship Calculator based on the land trust's estimate of the actual stewardship costs associated with a particular property.</i> <i>2) Apply a flat rate of 10% of the fee simple land value or Conservation Easement Agreement value up to a maximum cap of \$400,000.</i>

4. Eligible Activities

This round of funding will support the following:

- The acquisition cost of fee simple land properties.
- Purchases, donations and split receipts are eligible transaction types.
- Associated costs of acquisition - fee simple or conservation easement agreement.

Please also note that:

- Program funds may be combined with federal funds on the same project, as long as funds go towards unique expenditures; and
- Provincial funds cannot be used as matching funds.

Eligible expenses are:

Expenditures	Is the expense eligible ?	Is the expense eligible to include as Matching Funds (Cash)?	Is the expense eligible to include as Matching Funds (<u>In-kind</u>)?	Notes
<p>Salaries and wages - including all existing benefits for employees and contract staff, and mandatory employment-related expenditures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes all staff time necessary for planning, negotiating, managing, coordinating and completing the project <p>Note: up to 30% of the total value of the project (total project budget), can be requested for salaries and wages, to a maximum of \$10,000.</p>	✓	✓	✓	30% of ask for salaries and wages / or contractor costs
<p>Contractors - costs associated with contractors engaged to undertake the project activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including planning, negotiating, managing, coordinating and completing the project. <p>Note: up to 30% of the total value of the project (total project budget), can be requested for salaries and wages or Contractors, to a maximum of \$15,000.</p>	✓	✓	✓	
<p>Volunteer time - costs associated with volunteers engaged to undertake the project activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth (under age 25): \$14/hr Adults (over age 25): \$20/hr Professionals (e.g. lawyer, accountant, consultant): \$50/hr 	X	X	✓	
<p>Travel and vehicle rental, lease and operation expenditures - travel expenditures that are necessary to the successful completion of the project. To be eligible, travel must take place by the least expensive means, and rates may not exceed the maximum allowances permitted by Ontario Government guidelines.</p> <p>Transportation when the distance to the meeting or event venue is less than: 30 km is not eligible.</p>	✓	✓	✓	Define the purpose of trips

Expenditures	Is the expense eligible ?	Is the expense eligible to include as Matching Funds (Cash)?	Is the expense eligible to include as Matching Funds (<u>In-kind</u>)?	Notes
Costs associated with eligible land planning and securement initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Appraisal Costs</i> • <i>Survey Costs (if applicable)</i> • <i>Legal</i> • <i>Baseline documentation reports (only for CEA)</i> • <i>Land transfer tax</i> • <i>Environmental Assessments (if applicable)</i> • <i>Conducting biological inventories to inform the securement of the property</i> 	✓	✓	✓	
Purchase Price / Cost of Land or Conservation Easement Agreement	✓	✓	X	
Donated value of Land or Conservation Easement Agreement	N/A	✓	✓	
Stewardship Endowment Fund	X	✓	X	
Fundraising Costs	X	✓	✓	
Admin costs (max \$1,000 or 10% of request, whichever is less)	✓	✓	✓	
Cost of Independent Financial Project Audit - where eligible project funding request is greater than \$500,000	✓	X	X	
HST	X	X	X	

Eligible expenses notes:

- Timeframes for eligible match expenses are the same as for eligible expenses.
- Match funds must be directly linked to the project for which funds are being requested.

Donated land - When a project is a 100% donation, the entire appraised value would count as an in-kind match.

Purchase at a reduced cost -- When a property is appraised at \$100,000, and the landowner has agreed to lower the purchase price to \$80,000, the landowner would receive a charitable receipt for \$20,000 and \$20,000 can be included in the project budget as an in-kind match.

Part donation, part purchase -- When a property is appraised at \$100,000, and the landowner agrees to donate a portion of the property value, say \$80,000, the land trust would pay \$20,000 for the property. The \$20,000 paid by the land trust would be an eligible expense or an eligible cash match under the funding formula.

The proportion of purchase to donation could be different (e.g. 75% donation / 25% purchase). Bear in mind that for the split receipt – part donation / part purchase – the value of the donated portion must be at least 20% of the appraised value to qualify as a charitable donation and Ecological Gift.

Associated project expenses that occurred January 1, 2021 and May 24, 2021 can be considered as matching funds so long as the funds did not come from a provincial government funding source (Funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation is not an eligible match).

5. Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated against the project eligibility and ranked based on the following priorities or co-benefits including:

- Takes place in an area recognized nationally, provincially, regionally or locally as significant. This can include Areas of National or Scientific Interest, Provincially Significant Wetlands, Key Biodiversity Areas, Natural Heritage designation, Important Bird Areas, RAMSAR Wetlands of Significance, Biosphere Reserves, etc.
- Support recovery of SAR
- Contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Provision of Ecosystem Services
- Opportunities for completion of Ecological Gifts
- Contributions to human health and wellbeing
- Provides recreational Trails/Public Access.

The risks related to meeting the project close date would also be a consideration. OLTA reserves the right to request clarification and/or additional information from an applicant to aid in consideration of the request. OLTA reserves the right to award partial funding to eligible projects.

In the event that funds are returned to the Program, the Funding Agreement will be nullified and OLTA will begin the process of re-allocating the returned funds to other eligible projects before the end of the program year. Applicants with eligible projects that are not initially approved for funds will therefore be placed on a “waiting list”. Those included on the “waiting list” will be notified.

Please remember that this is a competitive funding program and that meeting project eligibility does not guarantee that your request will be successful and/or that full funding will be granted.

6. Auditing

Grant recipients receiving more than \$500,000 towards direct securement costs are required to have a financial audit completed by an external Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA).

OLTA reserves the right, on behalf of the Conservation Partnership with MECP, to complete an audit of the financial records of grant recipients to ensure compliance with the terms and obligations of the grant recipient agreement. When requested, the recipient shall provide and

make available to such auditors any records, documents and information that the auditors may require. The scope, coverage and timing of such audits shall be as determined by OLTA. OLTA will inform the recipient of the results of any audit and the recipient will address, or put into place measures to address, as soon as possible after the completion of the audit, any activities, which the audit may show to be necessary to be in compliance with the intention of Conservation Partnership Program.

7. Required Documentation

Required documentation for reimbursement projects:

Documentation to be submitted	Required with Application Form	Required for Payment
1) UTM coordinates/GIS files of the property vertices and UTM zones; or other spatial files (shp, kmz). If you do not have spatial files, please send a table of coordinates of the property boundaries.	✓	
2) Location and property maps	✓	
3) Conservation Plan - How is the area identified as a priority through conservation planning? Identify the plan and include a copy.	✓	
4) Completed Project Budget (as a spreadsheet, not a pdf).	✓	
5) Evidence of an established stewardship endowment fund policy/process.	✓	
6) Calculation for the required stewardship fund amount.	✓	
7) Signed DST permission letter from the applicant, and landowner for CEAs*		✓
8) A copy of the full appraisal (AACI or Ecological Gift Program approved appraiser).	✓	
9) Written acknowledgement regarding information/data disclosures.* For land/easement donations - confirmation that the donor understands that information regarding the donation will be submitted to OLTA in a funding request and may be shared with government partners.	✓	
10) A representation from a senior officer that all matching funds (excluding land value) are in place and no other sources of provincial government funds have been used as match.	✓	
11) For Conservation Easement Agreements only, a copy of the signed Conservation Easement Agreement and the full signed Baseline Documentation Report (BDR).	✓	
12) A copy of the post-closing title report (transfer deed) and land title demonstrating ownership (Fee Simple) or registration of Conservation Easement Agreement.	✓	
13) A complete financial project audit package and audit invoice (if applicable).	✓	
14) A copy of the Statement of Adjustments (if applicable).	✓	
15) A signed partnership agreement (if applicable).	✓	
16) At least one high quality image of the Project properties, for possible use in OLTA social media and other promotional materials, with authorization to OLTA for the use of the image(s).	✓	
17) Fully signed Grant Agreement.		ASAP once received
18) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting total grant amount.		With the Grant Agreement

Checklist of required documentation and when required for requests for advance funds:

Documentation to be submitted with application; for mid-project milestones; and for first and final installment	Required with Application Form	Required at Mid-Project Milestone	Required with Final Reporting and Final Installment
1) UTM coordinates/GIS files of the property vertices and UTM zones; or other spatial files (shp, kmz). If you do not have spatial files, please send a table of coordinates of the property boundaries.	✓		
2) Location and property maps	✓		
3) Current title abstract for the property	✓		
4) Conservation Plan - How is the area identified as a priority through conservation planning? Identify the plan and include a copy.	✓		
5) Completed Project Budget (as a spreadsheet, not a pdf).	✓		Revised project budget at reporting
6) Evidence of an established stewardship endowment fund policy/process.	✓		
7) Signed DST permission letter from the applicant, and landowner for CEAs*		Permission letter at agreement signing or before reporting	
8) A copy of the appraisal: -If a full or draft appraisal is not available at time of application submission, then an assessment of the value of the project land(s) with clear rationale explaining how the value was determined will be required. Acceptable documents include a short form appraisal, or a letter from your appraiser outlining how the value was determined.	Assessed Value with rationale, draft appraisal OR final appraisal, if complete.	Full Appraisal (as soon as available and no later than close)	
9) Fee simple only: Purchase and Sale Agreement / Option to Purchase / Signed Donation Agreement or Intent to Donate	Signed non-binding letter of intent OR Signed APS / Option to Purchase / Signed Donation Agreement / Intent to Donate	Signed APS / Option to Purchase / Signed Donation Agreement / Intent to Donate (as soon as available and no later than 7 days prior to close)	
10) Conservation Easement Agreement only: Letter of Intent / Conservation Easement Agreement/ Agreement of Purchase and Sale	Signed non-binding letter of intent with draft CEA OR signed Conservation Easement Agreement	Signed copy of Conservation Easement Agreement (as soon as available and no later than 7 days prior to close)	Proof of registration on title

Documentation to be submitted with application; for mid-project milestones; and for first and final installment	Required with Application Form	Required at Mid-Project Milestone	Required with Final Reporting and Final Installment
11) Written acknowledgement regarding information/data disclosures.* For land/easement donations - confirmation that the donor understands that information regarding the donation will be submitted to OLTA in a funding request and may be shared with government partners.	✓		
12) A signed partnership agreement (if applicable).	✓		
13) A copy of the preliminary title report/title search from legal counsel which acknowledges the Fee Simple land or Conservation Easement Agreement is free and clear of financial encumbrances, or evidence that the lender has agreed to postpone their financial interest in favour of the Conservation Easement Agreement and to have this postponement registered on title with the Conservation Easement Agreement.		As soon as possible and prior to close	
14) Fully signed Grant Agreement.		ASAP once received from OLTA	
15) For grants for land purchase, name and contact information of the recipient's lawyer handling the transaction.		With the Grant Agreement	
16) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting First Installment amount.		With the Grant Agreement	
17) A representation from a senior officer that all matching funds (excluding land value) are in place and no other sources of provincial government funds have been used as match.			✓
18) Final calculation for the required stewardship fund amount.			✓
19) For Conservation Easement Agreements only , a copy of the full signed <i>Baseline Documentation Report (BDR)</i> .			✓
20) A copy of the post-closing title report (transfer deed) and land title demonstrating ownership (Fee Simple) or registration of Conservation Easement Agreement.			✓
21) A complete financial project audit package and audit invoice (if applicable).			✓
22) A copy of the Statement of Adjustments (if applicable).			✓
23) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting Final Installment amount.			✓
24) At least one high quality image of the Project properties, for possible use in OLTA social media and other promotional materials, with authorization to OLTA for the use of the image(s).			✓

*Notes:

- DST permission letter sample is in Appendix A.
- Landowner permission letter template is in Appendix B.

8. Grant Agreement and Payment

Successful applicants will be required to sign a Grant Agreement with OLTA, outlining the terms and conditions of the grant acceptance, approved expenditures and related information, before any funds will be released.

Payment schedule with deliverables will be outlined in the Grant Agreement.

For reimbursement grants, OLTA will provide payment after receiving the signed agreement and invoice.

For purchase of land grants, 85% of the funds will aim to be paid in trust to the Recipient's lawyer three days prior to close. Final payments (of the remaining 15%) will be made after approval of the final report, with required documentation.

For 100% donations, payment will be made after approval of the final report, with required documentation.

Note: This payment schedule applies to year 1 only.

9. Communications

Information about this program shall not be publically shared until permitted by OLTA.

Appendix A: DST Permission Letter Sample (not required application stage but required before final reporting)

Date

Name [add contact information for your organization]

Title

Organization

Address

Re: Permission to report specific [organization name] properties to the Ontario Land Trust Alliance Inc., the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database, and to share Canada Target 1 Decision Support Tool screening results

Dear [Organization or landowner contact name],

We would like to acknowledge your efforts in establishing potential protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). We also congratulate you on managing these properties in such a way that they meet international standards and are eligible to be reported toward Canada's international biodiversity targets on protected and conserved areas

This letter is to seek your approval to work with OLTA to report eligible properties, owned by your organization, or protected through a conservation easement agreement, to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) if they meet the criteria for Protected Areas or OECMs.

Reporting of your areas to CPCAD means that certain information on these areas will be publicly available. The information includes spatial polygons and specific attributes such as year of establishment, type of governance, and IUCN protected area category. Interested members of the public will be able to download the data from CPCAD. In addition, Environment and Climate Change Canada will submit the information to the World Database on Protected Areas maintained by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Provinces and territories are responsible for reporting non-federal protected areas and OECMs to CPCAD.

This public reporting means that your areas will be counted as contributing towards national and international area-based conservation targets. It may also provide you with additional recognition for your conservation efforts. Participating in this reporting does not entail any regulatory or policy restrictions for the property; however, if the use or management of the property changes in the future, it would need to be re-assessed to see whether it still qualifies for international reporting.

Your permission is required before Ontario can report your properties to CPCAD or share your completed Decision Support Tool screening templates. Using the check boxes below, please indicate with your initials beside the check boxes, the actions for which [Organization Name or landowner name for a CEA] grants permission, and sign and date to indicate your approval.

Required:

- Permission for OLTA to complete and share the Decision Support Tool and supporting documentation with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) for projects funded through the Conservation Partnership.
- Permission for OLTA to complete and share the Decision Support Tool and supporting documentation with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) for other properties owned and under CEA.
- Permission for MECP to report the confirmed protected areas / OECMs to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).

Optional:

- Permission for MECP to share the finalized assessment documents for these properties within the protected areas community of practice (e.g., experts with the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas, program staff within provincial and federal governments).
- Permission for MECP to inquire in the future about potential inclusion of your areas in specific technical publications (e.g. summary reports, case studies). This permission would be reconfirmed prior to publication.
- Permission for MECP to share finalized assessment documents for any of the above-named properties that **do not** meet the Decision Support Tool screening criteria within the protected areas community of practice for the purposes of sharing expertise (e.g., experts with the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas, program staff within provincial and federal governments).

Contact _____
Title, Organization Date

Contact _____
Title, Organization Date

(A second signature is only required if, two signatures are required for your organization, or if you are providing permission for CEAs, in which case a signature is also required from the landowner).

Sincerely,

Alison Howson, Executive Director, Ontario Land Trust Alliance

Appendix B: Landowner Permission Letter Template

This is a template, which should be submitted on your letterhead.

[legal description of property]

To whom it may concern:

I am the owner [we are the owners] of the property described above. It is my [our] intention to ensure permanent protection of this property through [transferring title in fee simple to/registering a conservation easement on this property in favour] of [insert name of land trust].

I [we] understand that [insert name of land trust] will be submitting a funding application to the Ontario Land Trust Alliance for costs associated with protecting the property and will be sharing information about the property with them. I [we] understand that information about the property may also be shared with provincial government departments and agencies.

I [we] agree that [insert name of land trust] may share information about my [our] property as above.

[date]

[signature of owner(s)]

[Name of owner(s)]

[Address]

[Telephone number]

[Email]