Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario Program 2026/27

Guidelines for Applicants

Background

In recent decades, biodiversity loss has reached its highest level in recorded history, primarily driven by habitat destruction and degradation. Establishing and maintaining protected areas is critical to the conservation of species at risk. Land trusts provide essential protection by conserving species at risk habitat, implementing conservation actions, and promoting sustainable practices to conserve biodiversity for the benefit of current and future generations.

This Program has received funding support from the Government of Ontario.

New Foundant Feature: Foundant has a new feature which allows responses to be copied between request forms. We have toggled on this feature for the SSCO applications. If you wish to use this feature, please refer to this article and video for instructions. **It is your responsibility to double check that the answers are correct for each application.**

Introduction

This funding cycle represents the 2026/27 funding round, the first of a four-year fund. These guidelines are for the 2026/27 funding round only. The current funding cycle has a focus on supporting projects that acquire and preserve lands that provide habitat for species at risk, as well as conservation action activities that provide a benefit to species at risk. **There is strong encouragement for Conservation Action projects.**

Note: A species at risk means a species classified as extirpated, endangered, threatened or of special concern by COSSARO. Activities receiving funding through SSCO must target one or more species identified on the COSSARO list.

Please note that the funding rounds will follow a late fall/early winter application timeframe for the 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 rounds of this four-year fund. The 2029/30 funding round will follow a modified schedule with a late spring/early summer application timeframe to allow projects to wrap prior to the end of the Program. Additional rounds MAY be launched as needed, but the main funding round will have applications open in late fall/early winter except for the final program year in which applications will open in late spring/early summer.

Applications are being accepted to consider support for:

- Land acquisition – fee simple or conservation easement agreement
- Associated costs of land acquisition
- On-the-ground conservation actions that provide a benefit to species at risk recovery efforts.

Please note that SSCO only funds projects with activities occurring within Ontario.

Program Objective

The objective of the Program is to increase the quantity and quality of privately protected habitat for species at risk in Ontario.

Submission

Please thoroughly review:

1) OLTA SSCO Guidelines for Applicants (this document)
2) OLTA SSCO Application Form (within the Foundant grant application portal)
3) OLTA SSCO Project Budget Spreadsheets - Securement & Conservation Action
4) OLTA SSCO 2026 - 27 Agreement Sample (*draft*)

Completed applications and all documentation are to be submitted electronically via the Foundant Technologies grant application portal by **11:59 pm on Sunday, December 13, 2026**. There are two application forms in the grant application portal – one for Securement Projects, and one for Conservation Action Projects. Please refer to the information below on Project Eligibility to determine which application form is required for your Project.

You will need to submit multiple attachments with your application directly through Foundant. **Please allow yourself enough time to ensure you have all documentation required for submission**. While OLTA has increased the file size availability for uploads, it is strongly recommended to use reduced file sizes where possible as there is an overall system limit. *When uploading files, please name the file as follows: Land Trust-Project Name-Document Name* (eg. OLTA – Project ABC – Parcel Register).

Please contact the OLTA office if you have any problems or questions.

1. Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, an applicant must be:

- A non-profit, registered Canadian charity in good standing under the Income Tax Act (Canada);
- A member or associate of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance in good standing of OLTA at the time of application and throughout the duration of the funded project;
- Have the principal objectives of natural heritage protection and conservation.

Note: that the SSCO only funds activities occurring within Ontario

If applicants are unsure of their eligibility or have questions, please contact OLTA to discuss. Conservation Authorities are not eligible applicants, but their foundations may be – **please contact OLTA.**

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.**

2. Project Eligibility

Organizations may submit any number of applications. Each project must be submitted in its own application (i.e. two distinct projects cannot be combined into one application, additionally for securement projects two distinct properties cannot be combined in one application). Please note conservation action projects may occur on more than one property. Each project must be at least $5,000 submitted through its own application. Unless otherwise determined by the Review Committee, no applicant will receive more than 34% of available funds.

A **Securement 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. Securement projects may or may not have elements of conservation action activities included. Fee simple Securement projects require a completed Property Management Plan within one year of the property closing date and Conservation Easement Agreement Securement projects require a Baseline Documentation Report within one year of the property closing date.

A **Conservation Action Project** may be identified as the following activities:

- Activities required to maintain, conserve, restore species at risk habitat, or enhance other areas so that they can become species at risk habitat.
- Activities supporting public education and outreach programs relating to species at risk conservation.

- Activities to assist in the protection and conservation of species at risk, such as direct threat mitigation, field-based surveys and monitoring, research, and local and Indigenous knowledge collection.
- Species at risk monitoring and surveys to support development of Property Management Plans, Baseline Documentation Reports, species at risk inventories, habitat assessments, or evaluation of management actions.
- Implementation of activities benefitting species at risk conservation identified in a Property Management Plan or similar document for land owned by, or that has a conservation easement held by, the Applicant. Examples of eligible activities include: habitat creation, restoration and management, threat mitigation, and implementation of species or habitat specific best management practices that benefit species at risk.

Conservation Action projects do not include any element of securement. **If you are unsure about the eligibility of planned activities, please contact OLTA to discuss.**

Eligible *securement* projects must have a transaction closing date between November 1, 2026 and October 31, 2027. Project expenses and associated match funds related to securement must be incurred between November 1, 2026 and October 31, 2027. Conservation Action activities and expenses of securement projects are eligible from November 1, 2026 to October 31, 2027.

Eligible *conservation action* projects must be completed between November 1, 2026 and October 31, 2027. Expenses and associated match funds for conservation action projects are eligible from November 1, 2026 to October 31, 2027.

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

1. Have been identified as priorities through systematic conservation planning consistent with the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices (2019);

2. The property associated with the funded application must be located within the Province of Ontario

3. The property associated with the funded application must meet at least one of the following criteria:
    a. Contain habitat for species at risk
    b. Provide functional connectivity between properties that contain species at risk habitat; or
    c. Have the capacity to be converted or restored to species at risk habitat through eligible grant activities

4. Have a recent (no more than one year prior to closing) appraisal completed by an appraiser designated by the Ontario Association of the Appraisal Institute of Canada

5. Have matching contributions at a rate of **$1.00** non-provincial investment for every dollar of provincial funds.

Please note that the SSCO only funds activities occurring within Ontario.

Applicants are encouraged to complete a Decision Support Tool 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 agreement projects are only eligible for funding if a Baseline Documentation Report has been completed or will be completed within one year of closing. The Baseline Documentation Report must follow The Baseline Documentation Report: A guide and template for Land Trusts, Landowners, and Advisors (2022) prepared by the Ontario Heritage Trust and Ontario Land Trust Alliance.

For every $1 of Program funds awarded, a minimum of **$1.00** in matching funds from sources other than Ontario Government 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.

Please 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. Ontario Trillium Foundation funds are not eligible matching funds.

Stewardship Endowment

Funded securement 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***
Less than $50,000	*Minimum of $5,000*
>$50,000	*Note that a minimum of $5,000 is required, regardless of which option is used to determine stewardship endowment contribution.* *There are 2 approaches to choose from:* *1) Use the **Stewardship Calculator** based on the land trust's estimate of the actual stewardship costs associated with a particular property.* **OR** *2) Apply a flat rate of minimum 10% of the fee simple land value or Conservation Easement Agreement value, up to a maximum cap of $400,000 in stewardship endowment funds*

3. 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.
- Conservation Action activity costs.

Grant program eligible expenses:

Expenditures	Is the expense eligible?	Is the expense eligible as Matching Funds (*Cash*)?	Is the expense eligible as Matching Funds (*In-kind*)?	Notes
ELIGIBLE ACTIVITY-BASED EXPENDITURES				
Costs associated with eligible land planning and securement initiatives such as: • *Appraisal Costs* • *Survey Costs (if applicable)* • *Legal* • *Baseline documentation reports (only for CEA)* • *AFCC consultation costs* • *Land transfer tax*	✓	✓	✓	*Reported as staff or consultants' time, services, travel and hospitality*

• *Environmental Assessments (if applicable)* • *Conducting site inventories to inform the securement of the property or management plan development* • *Development of property management plan*				
Purchase Price / Cost of Land or Conservation Easement Agreement	✓	✓	X	
Donated value of Land or Conservation Easement Agreement	N/A	X	✓	
Stewardship Endowment Fund	X	✓	X	*To be identified as match for securement projects only*
Legal Defense Endowment Fund	X	✓	X	*To be identified as match for securement projects only*
Costs associated with communication about secured properties such as: • *Property identification or interpretative signage* • *Communications about outreach or education events* • *Media to raise the profile of properties (press releases, paid ads, printed materials)*	✓	✓	✓	*Reported as staff or consultants' time, goods, or services* *Communications directly related to fundraising are ineligible*
Fundraising Costs	X	✓	✓	
Costs associated with conservation actions • *Implementation of activities benefiting species at risk identified in property management plans* • *Maintaining, conserving or restoring species at risk habitat* • *Enhancing areas so they can become species at risk habitat* • *Threat mitigation*	✓	✓	✓	*Management includes conservation actions* *Reported as staff or consultants' time, goods, services, equipment/capital, or travel and hospitality*

• *Species at risk surveys and monitoring* • *Research directly tied to species at risk* • *Local and Indigenous species at risk knowledge collection* • *Outreach and education related to species at risk conservation*				
ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES				
Salaries and wages - including all existing benefits for employees and contract staff, and mandatory employment-related expenditures. • *Includes all staff time necessary for planning, negotiating, managing, coordinating and completing the project*	✓	✓	✓	
Contractors - costs associated with contractors engaged to undertake the project activities. • *Including planning, negotiating, managing, coordinating and completing the project.*	✓	✓	✓	
Volunteer time - costs associated with volunteers engaged to undertake the project activities • *Youth (under age 25): $17.95/hr* • *Adults (over age 25): $20/hr* • *Professional Services (e.g. lawyer, accountant, consultant, biologist etc.): $50/hr*	X	X	✓	
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**	✓	✓	✓	*Define the purpose of trips*

government guidelines. SSCO funds can support travel at a rate of $0.40/km ($0.41/km in Northern Ontario). Transportation when the distance to the meeting or event venue is less than: 30 km is not eligible. (Please note: this only applies to meetings and events NOT to fieldwork related travel. There is no minimum distance requirement for fieldwork related travel)				
Services – for eligible project activities	✓	✓	✓	*Must comply with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010 (Ontario) and the related Procurement Directive Summary*
Goods – for eligible management activities	✓	✓	✓	*Must comply with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010 (Ontario) and the related Procurement Directive Summary*
Equipment/Capital Item - for eligible conservation action activities E.g. small ATV, acoustic monitoring equipment, trail cameras, Kaleidoscope / ArcGIS software etc.	✓	✓	✓	*Costs $500+ would need to receive written approval by OLTA* *Must comply with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010 (Ontario) and the related Procurement Directive Summary*
Admin costs	✓	✓	✓	*Max $5,000 or 10% of request, whichever is less. Please ensure SSCO-funded admin costs are at or below this maximum in your request*
HST/GST	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.
- Communication and outreach costs directly linked to fundraising are ineligible.
- **Insurance and all taxes** *(aside from land transfer tax)* **are not eligible expenses or match costs.**
- Travel expenses are only eligible at the rates listed in the Ontario Travel, Meal, and Hospitality Expenses Directive (2020).
- Land trusts must comply with the *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010* (Ontario). Expenses for Goods, Services, Capital and Equipment items between $5,000 - $24,999 must be procured through a competitive process supporting best value for money. Three quotes should be obtained but do not need to be provided to OLTA unless requested.
- In addition, Capital/equipment expenses $500+ need to receive written permission from OLTA in advance of procurement.
- Appraisers must be designated by the Appraisal Institute of Canada-Ontario.
- **For purchase securement projects** - *due to administrative processing time for applications and agreements and for OLTA to receive the funds, there is no guarantee first installment funds will be received by the land trust before March 1, 2027*.
    - If this timeframe prevents your project from moving forward, **PLEASE LET US KNOW so we can track and report to MECP**. While we cannot disburse funds until we receive them, it is important in our reporting to demonstrate any barriers that projects faced. We encourage you to explore options such as shifting the closing date, wherever possible.

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 $20,000 difference can be included in the project budget as an in-kind match. Inclusion as in-kind match for the SSCO is not dependent on a charitable receipt being issued.

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 but can still be included as part of the in-kind match even if it does not meet this threshold for CRA and the Ecological Gifts Program.

Associated project expenses that occurred from November 1, 2026, to October 31, 2027, 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.*

4. Evaluation Criteria

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

- Expected conservation value to species at risk and alignment with program priorities
    - The project directly addresses one or more recovery actions identified in a Government Response Statement (GRS) issued under the Species Conservation Act, 2025 (Ontario), a Recovery Strategy, or a Management Plan for one or more species at risk.
    - Projects targeting species at risk for which peer-reviewed literature, recovery documents or government guidance identified habitat protection, securement or management as an effective conservation intervention.
    - Projects that deliver measurable conservation benefit to two or more species at risk, or that provide significant co-benefits to other at-risk wildlife or ecological communities beyond the primary target species at risk.
- Appropriateness of project design and budget.

The risks related to meeting the Project close date will 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 will take into consideration Projects that cannot proceed unless the full funding request is granted. However, 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 approved from the “waiting list” will be notified.

If the scope of your project changes significantly from what was submitted in the application (including but not limited to change in who is on title, purchase price, project lands) OLTA reserves the right to have the Review Committee re-assess the project and potentially adjust funding to suit the new project scope.

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. Application rounds are often highly oversubscribed and only the strongest applications may receive funding. Your application will be evaluated by a Review Committee of

subject matter experts solely based on the information provided within your application. Do not assume any prior knowledge of your project, progress to-date, or previous projects.

5. Auditing

OLTA reserves the right, on behalf of the Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario program 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 Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario.

6. Disposition/Mortgage of the Lands

Please refer to the Draft 2026/27 SSCO Agreement Sample, Clause 15, for information on potential disposition/mortgage of the lands.

If you are considering this in the context of Land Back/Indigenous reconciliation projects, please reach out to OLTA to discuss further.

7. Required Documentation

Required documentation for securement projects that have closed prior to the application deadline of December 13, 2026.

Documentation to be submitted	Required with Application Form	Required for Final 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 the relevant pages of the plan.	✓	
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 (Optional)* a. Appendix A to be signed by the land trust for Fee Simple b. Appendix A to be signed by the land trust AND landowner for CEA		Not required for final payment
8) A copy of the appraisal summary (appraiser designated by the Appraisal Institute of Canada-Ontario).	✓	
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	✓	
12) A copy of the post-closing title report (transfer deed), updated parcel register, and land title demonstrating ownership (Fee Simple) or registration of Conservation Easement Agreement.	✓	
13) Copies of invoices for all Project expenses requested.	✓	
14) A copy of the Statement of Adjustments (if applicable).	✓	
15) A signed partnership agreement (if applicable).	✓	
16) For Conservation Easement Agreements only, a copy of the fully signed Baseline Documentation Report) BDR within one year of closing date.		Not required for final payment
17) Completed PMP within one year of closing date		Not required for final payment
18) Species at Risk observations table	✓	
19) Species at Risk recovery table	✓	

20) At least two high quality images 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).	✓	
21) Fully signed Grant Agreement.		ASAP once received
22) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting total grant amount.		Upon OLTA confirmation of reporting completion

Required documentation and when required for requests for <u>securement projects that have not closed before the application deadline of December 13, 2026.</u>

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 for 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 relevant pages of the plan.	✓		
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 (Optional)* a. Appendix A to be signed by the land trust for Fee Simple b. Appendix A to be signed by the land trust AND landowner for CEA			Not required for final payment
8) A copy of the appraisal summary: -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 Summary (as soon as available and no later than close)	

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 for Final Installment**
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 30 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 30 days prior to close)	Proof of registration on title
11) Written acknowledgement regarding information/data disclosures for 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. a. Appendix B to be signed by the landowner for donations.	✓		
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, contact information, and banking details of the recipient's lawyer handling the transaction.		Upon instruction from OLTA	
16) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting First Installment amount.		Upon instruction from OLTA	
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.			✓

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 for Final Installment**
19) For **Conservation Easement Agreements only**, a copy of the full signed *Baseline Documentation Report (BDR) within one year of closing date.*			Not required for final payment
20) A copy of the post-closing title report (transfer deed), updated parcel register (must be certified), and land title demonstrating ownership (Fee Simple) or registration of Conservation Easement Agreement.			✓
21) Copies of invoices for all Project expenses requested.			✓
22) A copy of the Statement of Adjustments (if applicable).			✓
23) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting Final Installment amount.			Upon OLTA confirmation of reporting completion
24) Species at risk observation table	✓		
25) Species at risk recovery table	✓		
26) At least two high quality images 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).			✓
25) A completed PMP within one year of closing date			Not required for final payment

*Notes:

- DST permission letter sample is in Appendix A. **Note:** This letter has changed – please review.
- Landowner permission letter template is in Appendix B.

Required documentation for <u>conservation action only projects</u>:

Documentation to be submitted	**Required with Application Form**	**Required for Payment**
1) Species at Risk observation table	✓	
2)Species at risk recovery table	✓	
3) Workplan outlining all activities and draft timelines	✓	
4) Completed Project Budget (as a spreadsheet, not a pdf).	✓	
5) Copies of invoices for all Project expenses requested.		✓
6) Location and property map	✓	

7) 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.		✓
8) A signed partnership agreement (if applicable).	✓	
9) At least two high quality images 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).		✓
10) Fully signed Grant Agreement.		ASAP once received
11)Final Report		✓
12) Invoice addressed to OLTA requesting total grant amount.		Upon OLTA confirmation of reporting completion

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 approval of the final report, with required documentation.

For purchase of land grants, 85% of the funds will aim to be paid in trust to the Recipient's lawyer five business 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.

For conservation action only projects, 50% of the funds will be paid upon receipt of the signed agreement, and the remaining 50% will be paid after approval of the final report, with required documentation.

For combined securement and conservation action Projects, a payment schedule will be agreed upon with the recipient prior to the development of the Grant Agreement.

9. Communications

Information about this program shall not be publicly shared until permitted by OLTA and the Province of Ontario. Further details on communications and approval requirements will be included in the Grant Agreement.

Appendix A: DST Permission Letter Sample (Optional for SSCO, but strongly encouraged. If submitting, to be signed by the land trust for fee simple; land trust and landowner for CEAs; updated letter – CPCAD reporting is optional and permissions will be collected through the Protected Areas reporting process)

Date

Name [add contact information for your organization]
Title
Organization
Address

Re: Permission to report [organization name] properties funded through the Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario program to the Ontario Land Trust Alliance Inc., Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks, 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 share property details, including Canada Target 1 Decision Support Tool screening results, application information, and reporting information with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks for the purposes of the Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario program. CPCAD reporting permissions will be collected through the Protected Areas reporting process.

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, application information, reporting information, and supporting documentation with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) for projects funded through the Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario program.

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 Date
Title, Organization

_____ _____

Contact Date
Title, Organization
(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,

_____

Marketa Evans, Interim Executive Director, Ontario Land Trust Alliance

Appendix B: Landowner Permission Letter Template - to be signed by the landowner for donations

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]

Greenlands Conservation Partnership vs. Strengthening Species Conservation in Ontario

ITEM	GCP	SSCO
Program Objectives	The objective of the Program is to increase the protection of Ontario's ecologically important natural landscapes and secondarily, to increase the availability of green spaces and trails for the people of Ontario to enjoy.	The objective of the Program is to increase the quantity and quality of privately protected habitat for species at risk in Ontario.
Call for Proposals Timing	Late January/early February for each program year. *Additional rounds offered on an as-needed basis.*	Early November for each program year. *Additional rounds offered on an as-needed basis.*
Deadline for Applications	Early to mid-March for each program year. *Additional rounds offered on an as-needed basis.*	Early to mid-December for each program year. *Additional rounds offered on an as-needed basis.*
Funding Streams	Securement ***and*** Stewardship, Restoration and Outreach	Securement **and** Conservation Action
Eligible Activities	Land acquisition; Associated costs of land acquisition; Restoration and stewardship costs on properties secured through this program; Outreach events, including those focused on increasing the availability of green spaces and trails	Land acquisition (fee-simple, conservation easement agreement), associated costs of land acquisition; conservation actions targeting species at risk recovery including restoration, SAR surveys/monitoring, public education and outreach, threat mitigation, research and local Indigenous knowledge collection.
Eligible Expense Window	January 31st of each program year through February 1st of the following calendar year. Eg. January 31st, 2026, through February 1st, 2027, for the 2026/27 program year.	November 1st of each program year through to October 31st of the following calendar year. Eg. November 1, 2026, through October 31st, 2027, for the 2026/27 program year.
Match Requirement	2:1	1:1
Public Access Required	Yes	No