

Capacity Building Grants for Land Trusts Application Guidelines

Introduction

The [California Council of Land Trusts \(CCLT\)](#) is inviting proposals for projects that build the capacity of land trusts and their partners to help the state of California meet its goals in [Pathways to 30x30 \(30x30\)](#) and the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy \(NWLCCS\)](#).

CCLT will award a *maximum* of \$1.05 million in reimbursable grants to build the capacity of the state's land trusts and their partners through four categories:

1. Organizational Capacity Building
2. Building and Sustaining Partnerships
3. Strategic Planning for NWLCCS & 30x30 Implementation
4. Demonstration Projects

Funding for the Capacity Building Grant Program has been provided by the [California Department of Conservation \(DOC\)](#) through the [Climate Smart Land Management Program \(CSLMP\)](#).

Grant Timeline¹

June 20, 2024	Grant Applications Open
July 9-Sep 20, 2024	Program Director available for consultations
July/Aug (dates tbd)	Virtual grant workshops/webinars will be held
Sep 20, 2024	Applications Due/Notification of intent to apply
Oct 18, 2024	Grant Decisions (est.)
Oct 31, 2024 – Oct 1, 2026	Potential Grant Period

Contact Information

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Book a meeting: [Book time with Karin Winters: 15-minute meeting](#)

Website: <https://calandtrusts.org/programs-for-land-trusts/>

¹ Proposals submitted in partnership with Tribes, Native-led organizations, and/or underserved community partners must consult with the Program Director by September 20, 2024 to discuss alternative application deadlines.

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Purpose of Funding

The purpose of the California Onward: Capacity Building Grant Program for Land Trusts is to support land trusts and their partners to advance the goals of California's [Pathways to 30x30](#) (30x30) and the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy \(NWLCS\)](#). Land trusts are uniquely positioned to implement those efforts and, with additional support, have identified over 3.5 million new acres that could be contributed to the goals of 30x30. Through this program, CCLT aims to not only increase the capacity of land trusts but also to build the diversity of partners engaged by land trusts through specific support for partnerships with Tribes, Native-led organizations, and through projects benefiting underserved communities.

CCLT has the following two goals for the program.

1. Building a pipeline of 1 million new acres toward the goal of 30x30 and the NWLCS, and
2. leveraging \$20 million in local, state, federal, and private funding toward the goals of 30x30 and the NWLCS.

CCLT will set aside a portion of the available funding to support Native-led land trusts and land trusts partnering with Tribes, Native-led organizations, and underserved community organizations.

Eligibility Requirements

Proposals for the Capacity Building Grant Program (Capacity Building Grants) will be accepted from [California land trusts](#)², and [California land trusts in partnership](#) with Tribes, Native-led organizations, and community-based partners as defined below.

Eligible applicants for Capacity Building Grants include:

- [Conservation land trusts located in and serving California](#) that are tax-exempt organizations under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, ***or***
- [Conservation land trusts located in and serving California](#) that are tax-exempt organizations under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code *in partnership with* federal, state, and local government agencies; federally and non-federally recognized California Native Tribes; resource conservation districts; special districts; universities, colleges, and research institutions; and California 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations.

² A land trust is a private non-profit corporation whose principal purpose and activity is the direct conservation and/or stewardship of land and/or water resources and/or the preservation, protection, or enhancement of land in its natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, forested, or open-space condition or use. This purpose is reflected in its articles of incorporation, by-laws, and mission/purpose statement. More information about land trusts can be found in [CCLT's Membership Qualifications](#).

Applicants do not need to be members of CCLT to apply for or receive grant funding. However, non-member land trusts are encouraged to learn more about the benefits of membership on the CCLT [website](#).

Geographic Scope

The applicant's service area and project site must be located within the State of California. The Capacity Building Grant funds are solely for projects, programs, and activities within the State of California. Attempts will be made to make awards to a diversity of regions within the state.

Program Timeline

June 20, 2024	Grant Applications Open
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Rolling Deadline for Partnership Proposals or Proposals from Native-led Land Trusts

Applications from Native-led land trusts, or applications that include partnerships with underserved community organizations and/or Tribes or Native-led organizations are on a rolling deadline and may be submitted at any time. However, funding is limited and will be provided as applications are received and evaluated. ***You must contact the Program Director by September 20, 2024 to inform us of your intent to apply.*** Regardless of when you submit your application, your Grant Period must end by November 1, 2026.

Funding

A maximum of \$1.05 million³ will be awarded in Capacity Building Grants. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that range from \$25,000-\$150,000. There are no funding targets set for specific Grant Categories.

Proposals outside the suggested grant range may be considered and require consultation with the Program Director (see Contact Information on Page 1) prior to submitting. Any proposals with budgets above the \$150,000 suggested maximum should clearly demonstrate the scale of impact expected to result from the increased investment.

³ CCLT may award less than \$1.05 million if applications received do not meet funding focus areas and program priorities. In this instance, we would open an additional application round at a later time.

Reserved Funding

A *minimum of 15%* of available funding will be reserved for projects located in or directly benefiting underserved communities⁴. An additional *minimum of 15%* of funding will be reserved for projects partnering with California Native Tribes or Native-led organizations or led by Native-led land trusts.

If you are partnering with a Tribe, Native-led, or underserved organization and need additional time to complete your application due to capacity limitations, please contact the Project Manager (see Contact Information on Page 1).

Grant Categories⁵

The Capacity Building Grants will support land trusts and their partners in advancing the goals in [Pathways to 30x30](#) and the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#) through the following four categories.

1. Organizational Capacity Building
2. Building and Sustaining Partnerships
3. Strategic Planning for NWLCSS & 30x30 Implementation
4. Demonstration Projects

Eligible entities and/or partnerships may only submit one application for consideration as a Capacity Building Grant.

Evaluation Criteria are listed in the Appendix. Note that categories are described only to provide context for program goals and as funding examples. Applicants may formulate projects that align with multiple categories.

Funding can include staff or consultant time, or may fund new positions or partner stipends. Applications that build internal land trust capacity but do not include partnerships or collaborations are welcome and encouraged.

⁴ Metrics describing underserved communities are provided on Page 10 as part of the Application.

⁵ Please note that Capacity Building Grants are targeted towards building and sustaining capacity and expanding and increasing the diversity of land trusts and their partners. CCLT will be launching another grant program this year, funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board, that will focus on project development, transactions, and implementation.

1. Organizational Capacity Building

Organizational Capacity Building funding supports land trust efforts to increase the pace of land conservation in California. Grants should describe specifically how the grant will assist the organization in increasing or strengthening its capacity for new or additional projects related to 30x30 or NWLCCS. Funding is intended to help land trusts build and sustain organizational capacity and effectiveness and develop and enhance community programs and services. Examples include:

- Broad strategic investments designed to build organizational capacity and effectiveness for planning or implementation projects, such as increased staffing
- Staff training or development designed to build individual professionalism and effectiveness
- Developing or refining baseline documentation
- Developing or refining agricultural management plans required by easements
- Developing or refining specific organizational policies or practices
- Conservation planning, including integrating climate science and equitable land access goals into strategic conservation planning and priorities
- Organizational planning such as strategic planning, planning or strategy building for fundraising or grant development, and succession planning
- Developing or expanding a GIS database to support conservation planning
- Merger or strategic collaboration assessments

2. Building and Sustaining Partnerships

Building and Sustaining Partnership funding includes projects that will build and sustain partnerships between land trusts and historically underserved communities and/or Native partners. Successful projects should advance all partners' goals and purpose/missions. Letters of Support that demonstrate partner commitment and readiness to participate are required. The partners should submit a joint proposal. Joint proposals should specify how grant resources will help strengthen and/or formalize the partnership and be shared. Examples include:

- Community outreach and/or listening sessions
- Establishing and building connections with community-based organizations or Native Tribes or Native-led organizations to develop a specific project
- Planning for Indigenous stewardship of conserved lands, planning or providing cultural access, or planning for ancestral land return processes
- Joint site visits, including participant stipends and in-state transportation expenses
- Participation and/or partnership with existing workforce programs, or planning for new programs
- Regional conservation collaboration feasibility study and/or implementation

3. Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning funding supports the time and effort to develop planning documents to implement nature-based solutions and/or achieve objectives of 30x30. Plans should be developed in coordination with broad stakeholders and community interests such as local/state/federal agencies, farmers and ranchers, local historically underserved communities, Native Nations and Native organizations, non-governmental organizations, and environmental justice organizations.

Plan development should consider the best available climate data, using [Cal-Adapt](#) or other appropriate tools, for the project area and other applicable and available resources to ensure that the plan is consistent with the best available state, regional, and local data.

Examples of desired outcomes from the planning effort include:

- A quantifiable estimate of project benefits that further California's commitment to increasing climate action on our natural and working lands, such as improving soil health practices for carbon storage, greenhouse gas emission reduction from soils, soil water retention, water quality and availability, crop production, wildfire resiliency, and preserving ecosystems and biodiversity at risk from climate impacts.
- Attainment of strong local support for the NWLCSS or 30x30 and identified projects through broad inclusion of stakeholders and partners
- Development and management of a broad collaborative structure and effective networks of partners and stakeholders
- Coordination of climate smart land management efforts across land ownerships
- Resource and habitat connectivity
- Equitable agricultural land access and tenure for Tribes, Native organizations, and underserved communities
- Identification of habitat restoration opportunities that are located adjacent to land with high habitat value and provide climate refugia
- Economic development planning to support local land-based economies through climate action implementation

4. Demonstration Projects

Demonstration Project funding supports innovative projects that implement nature-based climate solutions that can be scaled up and/or replicated.

Projects will implement new, innovative, and/or underutilized techniques, technology, or approaches for implementing nature-based climate solutions, which:

- Have high potential to be scaled up and/or replicated
- Measurably achieve multiple benefits
- Incorporate participation from multiple partners and funding sources
- Support workforce development opportunities when feasible
- Integrate benefits to the most climate-vulnerable communities when feasible

Grant Requirements

With Capacity Building Grants, CCLT strives to build a culture of learning, limit the burden of reporting, and meet funder requirements.

Reporting Requirement

Quarterly virtual meetings will be conducted between CCLT and grantee(s) to hear about progress and to provide any support needed to the grantees. All grantees must submit quarterly invoices that will include a brief written report outlining the tasks and outcomes completed during the quarter, expenses associated with those tasks, and discussion of challenges encountered. A template and training will be provided. Other support contact can happen periodically as necessary or upon request.

A final report summarizing project goals, activities, and outcomes will be due upon completion of the project, or no later than 45 days after the end of the grant period. In addition, all grantees will be required to complete pre- and post-grant surveys.

Quarterly Cohort Meetings

Quarterly virtual cohort meetings will be conducted with CCLT and grantees to build technical capacity, and for grantees to network and share successes, ask questions, etc. All grantees should include two (2) hours per quarter into their overall budget for their project manager and other appropriate project staff to attend these cohort meetings.

Grant Agreement

If awarded, a grant agreement between CCLT and grantee will be required. The agreement will impose certain conditions on the grantee per CCLT's contract with DOC. The template for Grant Agreements is provided as Appendix B.

Payment

In general, projects will be funded in arrears based on quarterly invoices submitted by grantee to CCLT. There is no withholding or retention. Projects may be eligible for advance funding of up to 20%. Native or underserved community partners may be eligible for additional advance funds. Advance funding will be determined on a case-by-case basis after grants are awarded.

Application Instructions

Applicants will apply using the online application found here:

<https://calandtrusts.org/capacity-building-grants-for-land-trusts/>

A completed application form, Work Plan, and Budget Worksheets A and B must be submitted with the application.

Consultation with Program Staff

The Program Director is available for consultation with potential applicants prior to submittal. It is strongly recommended that prospective applicants schedule time via this link: [Book time with Karin Winters: 15-minute meeting](#) or reach out directly (see Contact Information on Page 1). Staff is also available to assist applicants complete the Application as needed.

Review Process

Applications will go through an administrative review for eligibility.

Eligible applications will then be reviewed by a Grant Review Committee (GRC) composed of representatives from CCLT and other key partners and peers with relevant expertise and experiences. The GRC may request applicants revise and resubmit applications, as necessary. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with the Program Director prior to submitting applications to minimize necessary revisions.

The grant proposals will be scored in accordance with the breakdown per prompt outlined below and as listed in the grant evaluation criteria in the Appendix. However, scores will be one of many aspects used to determine final grant decisions, including geography and focus areas, and impact on Native and/or under-resourced, underserved, disadvantaged, and severely disadvantaged communities. The GRC may recommend modifications, including recommending partial funding, to meet program priorities, funding targets, and available funding limitations. *Final funding decisions rest solely with CCLT.*

CCLT will notify all applicants of final decisions.

Application

Below are the application questions and prompts found in the online application. A corresponding maximum score will be noted next to the prompt or question, where relevant.

Project Overview

Applicant Name:

Project Name: (Please provide a descriptive name for the proposed project.)

Total Cost: (includes match or cost share)

Amount requested from Capacity Building Grant Program: (*total grant funds requested*)

Start Date: (no sooner than 10/31/24)

End Date: (no later than 10/1/26)

Project Location

Primary County:

Specific location (Assessor Parcel Number or address if available):

Nearest City (distance and direction):

Latitude (decimal degrees):

Longitude (decimal degrees):

Landowner: (if applicable)

State Senate District(s):

State Assembly District(s):

Applicant (lead applicant must be a 501c3 land trust)

Organization name:

EIN#:

Organization Purpose/Mission:

Primary contact name, title:

Primary contact email:

Phone:

Mailing Address:

Project Summary

Please provide a summary of the project in one or two sentences.

Purpose, Need, and Impact (suggested word limit: 500) (20 points)

1. Describe the proposed project, why it's necessary, and how your project will advance the pace and scale of conservation and/or stewardship in your community and/or California.
2. Describe the specific problems (current conditions, limiting factors, etc.), issues, or unserved needs the project will address.

Advancing California Conservation (suggested word limit: 250) (10 points)

Describe how this project will increase the pace of land conservation in California and how it quantitatively and qualitatively supports statewide environmental priorities, [Pathways to 30x30](#), and/or the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy \(NWLCS\)](#).

Advancing Objectives of Capacity Building Grant Program for Land Trusts (suggested word limit: 250) (10 points)

Describe how the proposed project will quantitatively and qualitatively advance the following objectives of the Capacity Building Program for Land Trusts:

1. Build a pipeline of 1 million new acres toward the goal of 30x30 and NWLCS.
2. Leverage \$20 million in local, state, federal, and private funding toward the goals of 30x30 and NWLCS.

Project Readiness and Defining Success (suggested word limit: 400) (20 points)

1. Describe the project status feasibility and the preparations undertaken to ensure prompt project completion.
2. What does success in this project look like one year after completion? How will you measure success, and what are distinct benchmarks for short-term and long-term success?

Community Support (suggested word limit: 150) (5 points)

Describe the public and institutional support for the project and any efforts to include the local community and/or Native Tribe or Tribal organization or stakeholders. *(Please do not include any support letters unless this is a partnership project.)*

Community Collaboration and Engagement (suggested word limit: 250) (5 point bonus, if applicable⁶)

If applying with a community partner, please explain how the organizations will work together, how grant resources will help strengthen and/or formalize the partnership, and how the resources will be allocated between partners. If the project benefits or serves a historically underserved or California Disadvantaged/Severely Disadvantaged Community (DAC/SDAC), please provide the location of the project and documentation demonstrating that it is located within or providing direct benefit and describe the services and/or benefits provided.

Defining Underserved/DAC/SDAC

If the project is in and/or directly benefits a historically underserved or California designated Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) or Disadvantaged Community (DAC), please document by using one of the following tools:

- Department of Water Resources Disadvantaged Community Mapping Tool (<https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/dacs/>)
- Cal Enviro Screen 4.0 (<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6b863505f9454cea802f4be0b4b49d62/>)
- Climate and Economic Justice mapping tool (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>)
- Additional demographic data defined in the BLM EJ mapping tool (<https://blm-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4b35b1e0a8e14dc884526c4b4fcdaa65>),

Direct benefits include training and workforce education, job opportunities, or cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities.

Native Tribe or Native-led organization (suggested word limit: 250) (5 point bonus, if applicable)

If applying with a Native Tribe or Native-led organization, describe and provide evidence that this project is engaging authentically with or directly benefiting Native communities, Tribal Nations, Native Tribes (does not need to be federally recognized), or Native-led organizations through an MOU, MOA, or letter of support.

⁶ Bonus points will only be applied to projects with partners. Land Trusts that are submitting proposals without partners will not be penalized.

Partner Organization Information (if applicable)

- Partner Organization Name
- Focus Area(s)/Purpose/Mission
- Community or Communities Served
- Leader Name, Title, and Contact Information
- Point of Contact Name, Title, and Contact Information (if different than leader)
- *Please upload a Memorandum of Understanding, Memorandum of Agreement, or other letter of understanding or support with the partner organization. This agreement should be signed by an authorized signer and approved by the organization's governing board.*

Project Team and Capacity (suggested word limit: 200) (5 points)

Describe the project team and their roles for this project, and describe your organizational capacity and commitment to complete and sustain the proposed activities.

Grant Activities (suggested word limit: 500) (15 points)

List and describe the grant activities by task. Please include no more than five (5) tasks. Tasks should align with the Project Work Plan and Budget task lists.

Project Work Plan (5 points)

Provide a realistic timeline for project activities over the course of the grant period. *(Applicants must use the provided Project Work Plan template.)*

Budget (10 points)

Attach completed Budget Worksheets A & B.

The budget should be sufficiently detailed to describe project costs. The budget should be divided into five (5) or fewer tasks and consistent with the grant activities and project schedule. Justification must be provided for costs to ensure that they are cost effective and appropriate to the work proposed. Costs should include project management, which will include quarterly invoice summaries of work completed, quarterly virtual meetings, completing surveys, and a final report. Applicants should also budget two (2) hours per quarter for their project manager and other appropriate staff to attend virtual cohort meetings.

Please upload a project budget that matches grant activities with associated costs and includes staff time, contractors, direct costs, and indirect costs. *Applicants must use the Budget Worksheet templates provided.*

Applicants can include an indirect/overhead rate of no more than 20% unless they have a federally approved NiCRA (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate). Indirect costs include but are not limited to utilities, office space rental, phone service, and other administrative activities. If a grantee seeks to recover indirect costs, this item should be included as a line item in the approved project budget.

Match or cost share is the portion of the project cost not funded by the grant program, is provided by the applicant and/or other sources, and can be cash or in/kind, such as staff time to implement the project. Cost share is not required but applications with secured cost share that demonstrate contributions towards total project cost will score more budget points. Cost share should be funds that will be used to directly achieve the project objectives and will be spent during the project timeline.

Availability of match will not be used as part of evaluation if the lead applicant is a land trust whose operating budget is less than \$100,000 annually, project is located in or directly benefits a historically underserved community, and/or if partnered with a Tribe or Native-led organization.

Ineligible Costs

Grant funding may *not* be used for the following.

- all costs incurred outside of the grant agreement term
- general operating support, including rent or other office expenses (unless part of budgeted indirect rate)
- accreditation or membership fees
- insurance premiums, property taxes, or other state/local/federal taxes
- land or easement acquisition costs
- endowments, legal defense, or reserve funds
- restoration costs and ongoing management/stewardship costs
- projects mandated to address a violation of, or an order to comply with, a law or regulation
- event sponsorship or event fundraising
- travel costs that do not adhere to state [guidelines](#), out of state travel costs
- food, beverage, or entertainment costs
- fines, penalties, damages, and other settlements resulting from violations or noncompliance
- buildings and heavy equipment

Appendix A: Grant Evaluation Criteria

Category	Criteria	Max Points
Purpose, Need, Impact	Project addresses a specific problem or need, goals and benefits are clearly described, project aligns with land trust's mission/purpose, goals, and priorities.	20
Advancing California Conservation	Project is aligned with the goals of California's NWLCCS and/or the Pathways to 30x30 and applicant can qualitatively & quantitatively describe how funding request would support goals and objectives in the NWLCCS and/or Pathways to 30x30	10
Advancing Objectives of Capacity Building Grants Program	Project is aligned with the goals of the Program and applicant can quantitatively and qualitatively describe how funding request would support these goals and objectives.	10
Readiness and Success	Project has well defined metrics for success. Applicant demonstrates that the project is feasible. Proposal demonstrates that necessary preparations for the project are sufficient for prompt project completion.	20
Community Support,	Project has public and institutional support and includes stakeholder, community, and Tribal input as appropriate.	5
Community Collaboration and Engagement (if applicable)	Project advances broader community needs, programs, and objectives, and demonstrates broad community benefit. If applicable, partners are involved in defining the problem and solutions and analysis of relevant data and planning documents. Project is in and/or demonstrates direct benefits to a California underserved or designated Severely Disadvantaged or Disadvantaged Community.	5 (bonus if applicable)
Native Tribe or Native-led organization (if applicable)	Project is on Tribally controlled land or otherwise demonstrates direct benefits to Native communities.	5 (bonus if applicable)
Project Team	Project team demonstrates sufficient organizational capacity to complete and sustain the proposed grant funded activities.	5

Grant Activities	Grant tasks and activities are clearly described and appropriate for project goals.	15
Project Work Plan	Project can be accomplished within the stated grant period of 6-23 months. Proposal demonstrates a reasonable schedule and is consistent with the tasks shown in the project narrative.	5
Budget	Project budget only includes allowable expenses and is within the range of \$15,000-\$150,000 or has received written approval for a higher budget. Proposed budget is appropriate to the work proposed and is consistent with the tasks shown in the project narrative. If applicable: match or cost share is secured and demonstrated.	10

The grant proposals will be scored in accordance with the breakdown outlined in the grant evaluation criteria in the table above. However, scores will be one of many aspects used to determine final grant decisions, including geography and focus areas, and impact on Native Tribes or Native organizations, underserved or disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities. The GRC may recommend modifications, including recommending partial funding, to meet program priorities, funding targets, and available funding limitations.

Final funding decisions rest solely with CCLT.

Appendix B: Sub-Grant Agreement Template

The draft Sub-Grant Agreement Template can be found at the link below for your reference.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wDbx-5YKwKE-8SEnfLuOfBu_AA2Dfou/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103310096649779033362&rtpof=true&sd=true