

RENEWAL HANDBOOK

What you need to get started

In addition to reviewing the instructions in this Handbook, land trusts planning and preparing for renewal should download and read each of the following documents and have a copy of each readily available throughout the application process:



Requirements Manual

The [Requirements Manual](#) (revised periodically) provides, all in one manual, information on the elements the Commission evaluates for every accreditation indicator.



Renewal Reference Application Packet

The [reference copy of the renewal application](#) (revised periodically) lists the information and documents that your land trust needs to provide to show it meets the requirements.

Every land trust needs to reference these two documents, the *Requirements Manual* and the *Renewal Reference Application Packet*.



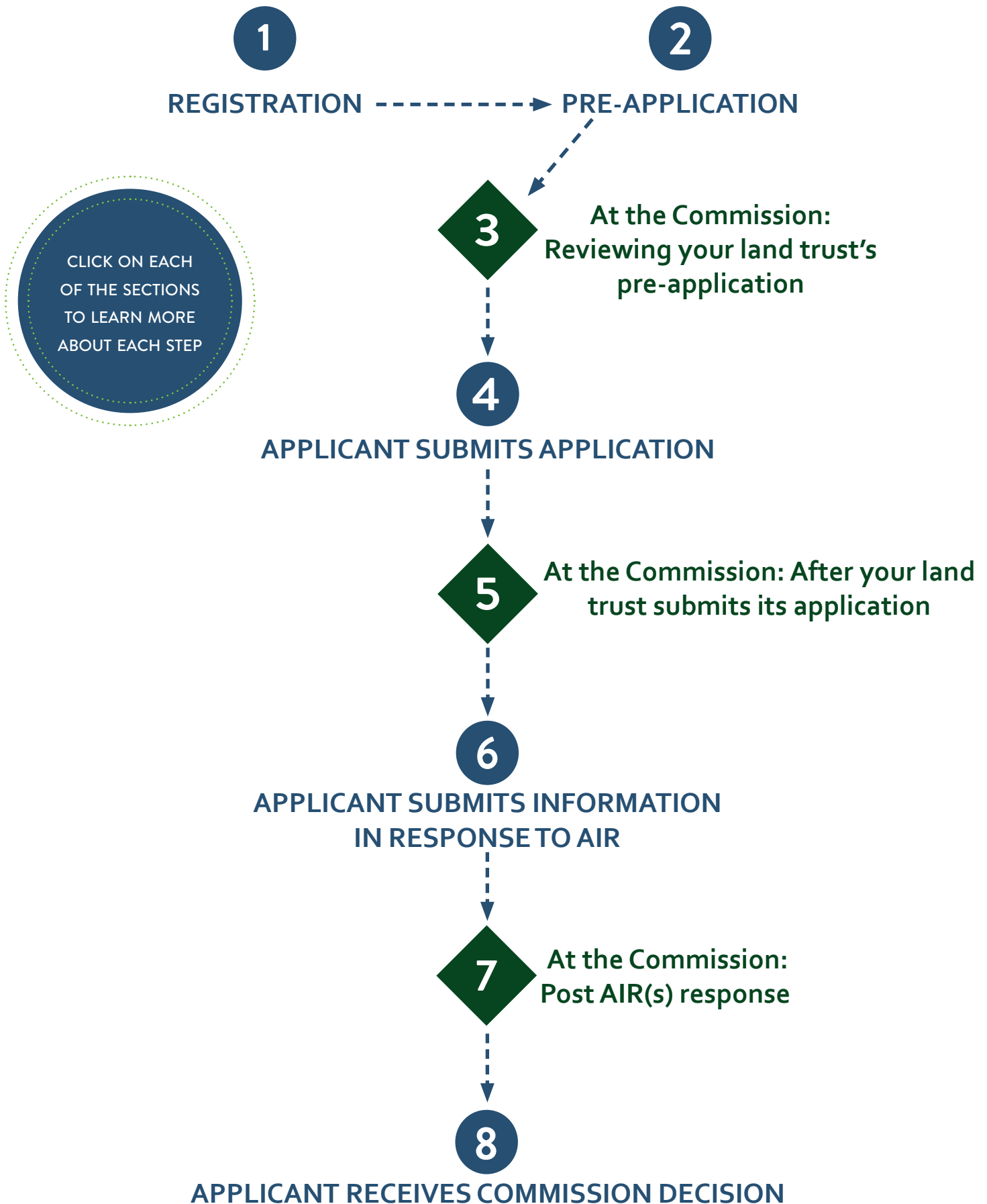
SPECIAL NOTE: If your land trust has a related entity (for example, an LLC or a supporting organization), then the Commission will need to determine whether and what additional documentation will need to be provided in accordance with the Commission's policy. Review the reference copies of the Addendum for Multiple Corporations – Basic and the Addendum for Multiple Corporations – Intermediate (as applicable) to preview that documentation; these addenda can be found in the *Renewal Reference Application Packet*. An addendum is **only** needed if your land trust has a related entity (which means being legally linked to another entity). **Not sure if your land trust needs this information? Contact us (before registration is best) at info@landtrustaccreditation.org.**

How to use this Handbook

The Renewal Handbook is a digital document with links to resources and information. We highly recommend viewing this document from your computer so you can frequently reference the accreditation website, landtrustaccreditation.org. The Handbook goes through each of the renewal process steps. Additional information about the Commission and its policies can be found on our website. Questions about the steps in the renewal process or issues with the Handbook should be sent to info@landtrustaccreditation.org.

Let's get started...

The Renewal Process



1 REGISTRATION

Overview

- Registration (and the entire application process) is completed using the [Accreditation Management System \(AMS\)](#).
- Registering confirms your land trust's intent to renew and ensures the Commission has your land trust's current contact information.

Helpful Links:

- [Why Renew?](#)
- [Get Ready for Renewal](#)
- [Renewal Registration](#)
- [Renewal Fees and Due Dates](#)

Registration FAQs

Q: How do we confirm who the Commission has on file for our accreditation contact?

- To confirm or change your accreditation contact send us an email or call us at 518.587.3143 with the updated information.

Q: How will our land trust know approximately when it will have to register for renewal?

- About 18 months before the land trust is required to apply, the Commission will send a letter to the accreditation contact with the specific renewal round the land trust has been assigned to. The round assigned is based on the accreditation expiration date. The specific dates for the registration period will be identified in the letter. The Commission will contact the primary accreditation contact about 6 weeks before registration opens, as a reminder.

Q: Why does registration remain open for 2 months? If I register early in the two-month period, does that mean my application due date will be earlier?

- Registration remains open for about 2 months because we understand that each land trust prioritizes and plans for renewal in a way that best fits its working schedule. The actual registration process should take just a few minutes!
- No matter when you submit your registration within the registration period your due date does not change from what is posted. In other words, your due date and accreditation review timeline are not adjusted based on when you submit your registration.

Q: Can our land trust register for a different renewal round?

- If your land trust wishes to apply for renewal of accreditation earlier than required, you may request permission to register for one round earlier than when your application is required. The Commission will attempt to accommodate your preference; however, priority will be given to applicants that must apply in that round.
- There are very limited circumstances where the land trust may be given a one round extension to the due date. [See Deadlines and Exceptions for Catastrophes](#)

2

PRE-APPLICATION

Overview

- Your land trust can start working on the pre-application as soon as the registration is submitted (responses in your application must be no older than 90 days prior to submission—plan accordingly).
- Data from the pre-application is used by the Commission to select projects and targeted verification items for which the applicant will need to submit detailed documentation with its application.

- The pre-application is due approximately twelve weeks before the complete application is due.

Helpful Links

- [Renewal Pre-Application](#)
- [Renewal Accreditation Agreement](#)
- [Land Conservation Project List \(LCPL\) Toolkit](#)
- [Schedule of Dedicated and Restricted Funds \(SDRF\) Toolkit](#)
- [Legal Defense Reserves Calculator](#)

Pre-Application FAQs

Q: What attachments do I need to include with my pre-application?

- Your land trust's most recent Form 990
- Renewal Accreditation Agreement
- LCPL
- SDRF
- Completed Legal Defense Reserves Calculator

The complete list of attachments and more information on how to fill them out are located on the pre-application webpage.

Q: How do I know when the pre-application is due for our land trust?

- All due dates relevant to your round can be found in the Accreditation Management System (AMS) as well as being posted on our website. [Application Due Dates](#)
- Failure to submit a complete application by the deadline will make your land trust ineligible to submit an application. Learn more about the [Deadlines and Exceptions Catastrophes Policy](#).

Q: Is there guidance for how to notify community members and partners that our land trust is going through the accreditation process?

- Learn more about Notifying Community and Partners: [Public Notice Toolkit](#)

Q: What does the Commission do with the conflicts of interest information that we provide in the pre-application?

- The Commission ensures the review team does not have conflicted members and the conflicted parties are not part of the final decision on your application. See the [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) for more information.

3

At the Commission: Reviewing your land trust's pre-application

You submitted your registration, paid the \$850 registration fee, completed your pre-application and submitted it through the AMS...now what?

→ **Review:** [Pre-Application Review Process and FAQs](#)

Your pre-application is reviewed by a Commission staff member. In the AMS you will see that your land trust has been assigned a staff member who works with you for the duration of the renewal process. You can use the AMS to send messages (or reach out directly through phone or email). Remember, the staff reader of your application is there to help your land trust submit the best application possible and should be seen as a resource. **Simply put, we like it when you reach out!**

Pre-Application Purpose

The Commission uses the information submitted in the pre-application to:

- **Select** projects and targeted verification items for which the land trust will need to submit detailed documentation as part of the application.
- **At least five weeks before the main application due date**, applicants receive notice of the selected projects from the Accreditation Management System (AMS). Project documentation is submitted as part of the main application.

Application Fee

- The Commission calculates your fee based on the Form 990 that was submitted with your pre-application. An invoice for the fee will be sent via email, and payment is required when your application is submitted. Want to get an estimate on what your fee will be?
- **Review:** [Accreditation Fees](#)

4 APPLICATION

Overview

- Your land trust can start working on the application as soon as registration is submitted through the AMS.
- Your land trust can preview the questions and attachments by reviewing the Renewal Reference Application Packet.
- **If** your land trust has EFIs, it is required to provide a statement explaining and documentation showing how it met each EFI.

- Your land trust will need to pay the application fee and submit the application on or before due date.

Helpful Links

- [Renewal Application](#)
- [Renewal Reference Application Packet](#)
- [Expectations for Improvement \(EFI\)](#)
- [Accreditation Due Dates](#)
- [Accreditation Fees](#)

Application FAQs

Q: What needs to be submitted in our land trust's application?

Your land trust's completed application will be comprised of:

- Application questionnaire
- Application documentation
- Project documentation
- Targeted verification documentation
- Board Resolution
- A copy of your public notice(s)
- Remittance of application fee

Q: When do I submit Expectation for Improvement (EFI) documentation? How do I know if our land trust has any EFIs?

- Expectations for improvement are issued when the Commission determines that an accredited land trust must take additional actions to fully comply with the accreditation requirements. Your land trust would have signed a Summary of Findings that listed any EFIs as part of your accreditation decision.
- Documentation that shows you have fulfilled the EFI is due when you submit your application.
- The application includes a tab that lists your EFIs. If you are unsure of your EFI status, please contact the Commission.

5

At the Commission: After your land trust submits your application

Once your application is submitted, your assigned Commission staff member and one or more volunteer commissioners form your review team. They read your application in detail.



Review: [After Your Submission](#)

- After reviewing your application, it is likely your review team will need more information to clarify the written documents or the land trust may need to take corrective action to show it met the requirements. Your land trust will receive an Additional Information Request (AIR).
- You may receive an AIR anywhere from six weeks to four months after your application was submitted. A due date for your specific AIR(s) will be issued by your review team.

6

APPLICANT RECEIVES ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUEST (AIR) AND SUBMITS RESPONSE

Overview

- Your land trust will have 3 months to provide documentation for any AIR(s) that are issued.
- Responses to AIR(s) will be submitted through the AMS.

Helpful Links

- [Additional Information Request](#)
- [Accreditation Policies](#)

AIR FAQs

Q: Is getting an AIR common?

- Yes, the accreditation process is built to provide opportunities for land trusts to provide additional information or take corrective action. Almost every land trust receives an AIR as part of the accreditation process.

Q: How will I know when my AIR is ready for my land trust to review?

- You will get an email from the AMS. The AIR typically comes anywhere from six weeks to four months after the application was submitted. You can download a .pdf version of the AIR from the AMS.

Q: What if my land trust has questions about our AIR?

- Reach out to your review staff member (remember, you can message them in the AMS, call or email with them) with any questions about the AIR. They can often provide context that will help you identify the best document(s) to provide in response to the AIR.

Q: When is our AIR Response Due?

- Applicants are provided three months to respond to the AIR. A due date for your specific AIR(s) will be issued by your review team.

7

At the Commission: after your land trust has submitted a response to any AIR(s)

The Commission makes final decisions on each complete application based on the review team's evaluation. It can be hard to wait to hear from the Commission! The Commission has only a few decision-making meetings a year, and land trusts that apply in the same application round are reviewed on different timelines. While each applicant is presented for a decision by the Commission at the earliest opportunity possible, the process from time of application to decision can take a year for some applicants. A renewal applicant remains accredited throughout the application process, and the next term of accreditation begins after a decision to renew is made by the Commission.

→ Review: [Accreditation Policies, I. Application Decisions](#) to learn more about application decisions

8

APPLICANT RECEIVES COMMISSION DECISION

Overview

- The Commission will contact the primary accreditation contact and provide the final determination.
- Your land trust may appeal a Commission decision to not award accreditation by following the Application Policies, II. Appeals.

Helpful Links

- [Appeals Policy](#)
- [When to Contact the Commission](#)
- [For Accredited Land Trusts](#)

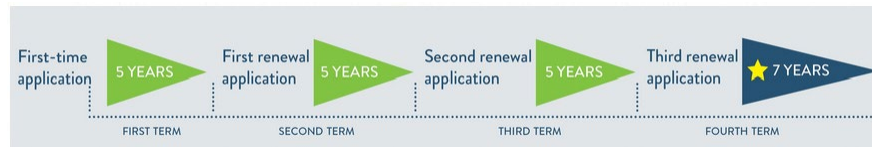
Commission Decision FAQs

Q: Is there paperwork my land trust needs to sign?

- Yes, when your land trust is renewed it will be asked to sign a License Agreement to be able to use the seal and a Summary of Findings with any expectations for improvement or notices related to your accreditation decision. Because the seal is a registered trademark of the Commission, the Commission licenses the use of the seal to land trusts only after a rigorous process to verify they meets national standards.

Q: How long is my accredited term?

- Accreditation is initially awarded for a five-year term and then is renewed for additional terms. The first two renewal terms are also for five years. After 15 years of being continuously accredited, a land trust is eligible for an extended term of seven years. [Learn more about the Extended Term](#)



Q: What if my land trust is thinking about a merger or undergoes a major organizational change during our accredited term?

- Please contact the Commission.
Review: [When to Contact the Commission](#)