



The Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund Program Description and Request for Proposals March 15, 2019

I. Overview

The Network for Landscape Conservation (NLC) is pleased to release this Request for Proposals (RFP) for the new Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund, made possible through the generous support of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The purpose of the Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund is to accelerate the pace and effective practice of place-based, collaborative landscape conservation across the United States. The Fund specifically seeks to build critical capacity and forward momentum in landscape conservation partnerships by supporting the key building block activities and collaborative processes that move partnerships forward.

The Fund will provide approximately \$335,000 in funding through competitive grants in 2019. Applicants may request a one- or two-year grant of \$10,000 - \$25,000. Interested applicants should carefully review this Request for Proposals (RFP) for instructions.

The Catalyst Fund is pleased to have a portion of the Fund dedicated to Indigenous-led partnerships that serve Indigenous communities working on landscape conservation. Applicants representing a landscape partnership that is Indigenous-led and primarily serving an Indigenous community(s) should read the [Indigenous Community RFP](#) and apply through that separate process.

The 2019 grant cycle timeline is as follows:

2019 Activity	Date
RFP release	March 15
Fund webinars	March 22 and March 28 at 2 pm Eastern time
Pre-proposals due	April 26
Pre-proposal decisions	June 3
Full proposals due	July 1
Catalyst grants announced	August 15

II. Background on Landscape Conservation and the Purpose of the Fund

Background on Landscape Conservation: Conservation in the United States and beyond is undergoing a fundamental transition as we recalibrate conservation efforts to work at the

landscape scale—the scale nature functions. People are connecting across private and public lands, and from cities to the wilds, to address mounting threats including climate change, habitat loss, and fragmentation. As people work together across geographies, sectors, and cultures to conserve the many values our landscapes provide, conservation is becoming less piecemeal and more holistic, less top-down and more collaborative. Increasingly, people are working together in long-term and community-grounded partnerships to sustain our natural and cultural landscapes and the health and vitality they provide for people and all of nature.

This trend is well underway. A 2017 NLC survey of 132 landscape conservation initiatives across the country, [Assessing the State of Landscape Conservation Initiatives in North America](#), confirmed a dramatic increase in collaborative landscape conservation: “Nearly 90% of the initiatives surveyed have been founded since 1990, with 56% founded since 2010.” Also, 75% of the surveyed initiatives were voluntary collaborations, representing an important shift from top-down and regulatory approaches to more horizontal and place-based efforts.

The growth of enduring, place-based conservation partnerships demonstrates tangible progress and significant potential to address the complex, interrelated large-scale challenges of the 21st century that are eroding our natural, cultural, and community health and heritage. As noted by a keynote speaker at the 2017 [National Forum on Landscape Conservation](#): “Landscape conservation presents a huge opportunity . . . to touch down in people’s lives, to solve climate challenges, create resilient landscapes—all at the same time. Landscape conservation addresses biodiversity, water and air, food and fiber, jobs and livelihoods, and people’s identities.”

Purpose of the Catalyst Fund: The purpose of the Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund is to accelerate the pace and effective practice of place-based, collaborative landscape conservation across the United States. The Fund specifically seeks to build critical capacity and forward momentum in landscape conservation partnerships by supporting the key building block activities and collaborative processes that move partnerships forward.

The lynchpin of landscape conservation is collaboration across sectors, geographies, and cultures—processes that bring people together in long-term partnership to build trust, find common ground, and move forward together to achieve shared conservation vision and action. This approach takes considerable time, and the importance of investing in this collaborative process should not be under-valued—by participants, funders, or policymakers. As noted in a 2011 Stanford Social Innovation Review article, “Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails.” Other analyses have identified dedicated staffing for coordinating partnerships as closely correlated with both success and, importantly, the overall speed at which a partnership achieves tangible conservation goals.

Unfortunately, funding for coordinating partnerships and advancing key steps to partnership success is scarce. The purpose of the Catalyst Fund is to address this central need directly, and to achieve the following objectives:

1. Catalyze the rapidly growing collaborative landscape conservation movement as a priority strategy to sustain America’s natural and cultural heritage and future;
2. Encourage a more broad-based and inclusive landscape conservation movement, including through a focus on Indigenous communities and perspectives;
3. Support and strengthen specific place-based partnerships, building long-term capacity and “social capital” on behalf of our imperiled landscapes and the myriad ecosystem services they provide; and
4. Advance best practices and innovation in the field.

III. Eligibility

1. Applicants must be U.S. based non-profit organizations with approved IRS 501(c)(3) status.

Grants can be awarded only in the 50 U.S. states, and only to non-profit organizations with approved IRS 501(c)(3) status.

NOTE: A landscape conservation partnership can apply directly if it is a non-profit organization with approved IRS 501(c)(3) status. However, as many partnerships are informal collaboratives, we anticipate that in many cases eligible applicants will apply *on behalf of* a partnership because they are the fiscal sponsor organization of the partnership; the recognized lead convener of the partnership; or a recognized partner organization within the partnership. Other involved partners (e.g., tribal governments, public agencies, academic institutions, for-profit entities, and other non-profit organizations) may work on funded grant activities as paid contractors.

2. Applicants must apply on behalf of a landscape conservation partnership as defined, for purposes of this RFP, as:

Place-based: The partnership has a geographically explicit area of focus that is sufficiently large in scale to encompass a diversity of landowner types, conservation issues, jurisdictions, and stakeholder interests. (Landscape conservation partnerships can occur in all types and mixes of landscapes, including urban, suburban, rural, working, wild, and combinations thereof.)

Focused on a Shared, Long-term Vision: The partnership has articulated a long-term vision for the health and vitality of the defined landscape, encompassing people and nature.

Collaboratively Governed: Although one organization may play a lead convening/coordination role, a formal or informal governance structure or decision-making policy fosters collaborative leadership and participatory engagement of the partners.

Inclusive: The partnership approach emphasizes inclusive outreach and dialogue with various stakeholders on the landscape, informed by multiple interests and perspectives.

Informed: The partnership is committed to building the shared foundation of knowledge necessary to achieve its goals; this can include utilization of ecological, cultural, traditional, and social information.

3. **Applicants who represent a landscape partnership that is Indigenous-led and primarily serving an indigenous community(s) are eligible to apply through the specific Indigenous Community Catalyst Fund Application process.**

These applicants should read the [Indigenous Community RFP](#) in preparation for application.

IV. Fund Priorities

NLC seeks proposals that advance a U.S. collaborative landscape conservation partnership (or the U.S portion of a transboundary effort) in specific, strategic ways.

We are looking for proposals that clearly identify:

- the partnership’s conservation vision and goals;
- grant period objectives for building the partnership and advancing its conservation goals;
- proposed activity(s) that will best achieve those objectives; and
- how the grant will significantly advance partnership goals and catalyze forward momentum.

Although every partnership will be different, there are common steps many effective landscape conservation partnerships will take at different stages of growth. We ask applicants to carefully review the chart in the RFP Appendix, “Landscape Conservation Partnerships: Common Steps to Success” (or the “Chart”).

The Chart identifies three stages of partnership growth: “Starting,” “Building,” and “Conserving.” Please note that the Catalyst Fund’s primary focus is on aiding partnerships in the Building stage—where participants have already demonstrated a commitment to (and preliminary forward momentum in) developing and implementing a shared conservation vision and goals. In other words, participants have built the preliminary relationships and established the foundation of trust necessary for working together and moving forward. The Building stage is often the stage at which the volunteer time of the participants is no longer enough to sustain and build the partnership, and when funding to advance the collaborative process and specific building block activities will land on fertile ground, solidifying group momentum and accelerating forward progress.

Defining partnership stages is somewhat subjective. If potential applicants believe they have compelling projects in the Starting or Conserving stages that otherwise meet Catalysts Fund guidelines and objectives, they should connect with NLC staff per instructions in Section VIII of this RFP.

The Chart outlines “Common Steps to Success” regarding A) Conservation Objectives and Activities, and the interrelated B) Partnership Building Activities. This broad-brush thinking on approaches and activities provides background in framing a proposal, but is not prescriptive. Each landscape conservation partnership should operate and develop strategies within the context of its mix of people, place, and priority issues. The Chart does not cover every type of

partnership trajectory or activity. Instead, it is an informed framework that illustrates the kind of careful partnership building and strategic conservation planning we expect of applicants. In crafting a proposal, we ask applicants to identify the most impactful set of activities that will advance *their* partnership and conservation goals at this time, and that will optimize partnership momentum and conservation outcomes going forward.

Applicants may apply for:

1) Funding to support a priority activity(s) to advance specific objectives

The Fund will support a targeted project approach as long as the applicant demonstrates the priority value of the activity(s) in advancing the partnership's conservation objectives and forward momentum. See sample "Conservation Objectives and Activities" in the Chart. Perhaps the partnership might undertake a conservation mapping and prioritization exercise, or a series of outreach activities to targeted stakeholders to increase partnership awareness and involvement.

2) Funding to support capacity building more broadly, including the collaborative process and multiple "steps to success"

The Fund will support general partnership building and coordination function as long as the grant period objectives and activities are clearly articulated and the applicant demonstrates how these activities will advance the partnership's conservation objectives and forward momentum. See the various "Partnership Building" priorities and activities listed in the Chart. *For example*, the partnership might advance a suite of activities that a coordinator or others will implement during the grant period to strengthen and advance the partnership. This might include partnership meetings, governance, outreach, and communications tasks. Growing a robust partnership that achieves its conservation objectives involves a concerted focus on multiple, interrelated areas over time.

V. Evaluation Criteria

All applications will be evaluated on the quality of the following criteria:

Partnership:

- Demonstrated commitment to building a broad-based, collaborative, and enduring partnership.
- Partnership vision, goals, and objectives focused on tangible, long-term conservation outcomes on the landscape.
- Poised for growth/strategic action: the partnership has sufficient buy-in to effectively use/leverage Catalyst Fund support to take a meaningful step toward its long-term vision (i.e., it is in the Building stage of growth per the RFP Appendix Chart).
- Commitment to the proposed activity(s) is part of a longer-term strategy to achieve tangible conservation gains on the landscape, with a clear plan to continue on that course with new momentum after the grant period.

Proposed Activities:

- Clear articulation of the proposed objectives, activities, and timeline.
- Demonstration of how the proposed work will advance the conservation goals of the partnership by the end of the project period.
- Clarity regarding momentum and impact past the grant period: what will come next for the partnership as a result of the planned activities?

Additional considerations:

- Landscapes (urban, rural, working and/or wild) that have particularly significant ecological, cultural, and/or other ecosystem service values—including but not limited to lands identified as climate resilient (through e.g., [The Nature Conservancy methodology](#)) or lands that are particularly valuable for habitat connectivity.
- Partnerships that include under-served communities.
- Proposals that meet all other criteria but are located in regions with proven need and fewer examples of landscape conservation partnerships.
- Proposals that may not conform directly to the RFP Appendix Chart, but that show demonstrable promise for advancing priority conservation objectives of the partnership and/or showcasing replicable innovation in the field.

VI. Application Requirements

1. Funding Restrictions

Funding can be used for:

- staff or contract support in furtherance of partnership building and advancing conservation objectives in the specific ways outlined in the proposal.
- direct costs—e.g., convening (space, food, lodging, and travel); web and print communications; outreach activities that educate and involve stakeholders; and costs involved in science-informed landscape conservation planning, mapping, and prioritization.

Funding cannot be used for:

- academic research or writing.
- capital campaigns or capital improvements.
- office equipment.
- acquisition of land or conservation easements.
- political lobbying.

2. Funding Match

Applicants must demonstrate a funding match of at least 1:1. Up to 50 percent of the 1:1 minimum match requirement may be made through in-kind support by the applicant and other partnership organizations. At least 50 percent must be made through direct funding commitment—from the applicant; partnership organizations; local, state, and federal agency grants; and/or other philanthropic sources. Previously expended funds cannot be used as direct match. If matching funds have not yet been secured, please indicate a time frame and the

sources from which you anticipate securing other funding. The purpose of the match requirement is in part to encourage applicants to reach out to local and regional funders and build longer-term support for the partnership. Second-year grants will not be awarded if the first-year match has not been secured.

3. Partnership Support

Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to the proposal from the partnership leadership. Applicants will be asked at the pre-proposal stage whether or not they have secured that commitment and, if not, how and when they will do so. Applicants will also be asked at the pre-proposal stage to submit a list of three partner organizations supportive of and involved in the pre-proposal. At the invited proposal stage, applicants will be asked to submit support letters from the three partner organizations and from the partnership leadership.

VII. Grantee Expectations

Recipients of Catalyst Fund grants should expect and plan for the following:

1. *Peer Exchange and Training:* The field of collaborative landscape conservation is growing rapidly, and the people involved have much to learn from each other. Grantees should expect to join bi-monthly 60-minute calls or webinars with other grantees and to attend an annual in-person convening for peer exchange, training opportunities, and mutual inspiration (travel funding will be provided). NLC staff and leadership will also be available as helpful for problem-solving, providing background resources, and/or connecting grantees (as mentors or mentees) to other practitioners wrestling with similar issues.
2. *Grant Reporting:* Grantees will be asked to provide a short, mid-grant written report as well as a final written report. Grantees will document how the Catalyst Fund grant was spent and evaluate its impact.
3. *Long-term Tracking:* Grantees will track progress for five years after the grant period by filling out a short annual survey for NLC.

VIII. How to Apply

The Catalyst Fund is currently accepting pre-proposals for one- or two-year grants of \$10,000-\$25,000. Although applicants are eligible to apply in future grant cycles, no grantee may receive more than \$25,000 total during the first three years of this Program.

Pre-proposals are due by 9 pm Eastern time on April 26th, 2019. Please use our [online application system](#) to register your organization, fill out the pre-proposal form, and submit required attachments. No other forms of submission (e.g., email, hardcopy, fax) will be accepted.

Read the RFP carefully to ensure your potential request is a sound fit with the Catalyst Fund. All Catalyst Fund documents and background information can be found on our website:

<http://landscapeconservation.org/catalyst-fund>. Catalyst Fund webinars will be held on [March 22nd](#) and [March 28th](#) at 2 pm Eastern time, and you may submit questions as part of the webinar registration process. You may also contact NLC staff with questions after careful review of the RFP: [Jon Peterson](#) or [Emily Bateson](#). Please indicate “Catalyst Fund RFP Question” in the subject line of your email.

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The Network for Landscape Conservation: Founded in 2011, the [Network for Landscape Conservation](#) (NLC or Network) connects people to ideas and innovations—and each other—to build a community of practice for the rapidly growing field of landscape conservation. NLC works with partners across sectors, cultures, and geographies to develop effective tools and strategies and to advance best practices and policies to help people safeguard the landscapes that enable people and all of nature to thrive. Our broad-based network today includes more than 150 organizational partners and 2,500 practitioners, fulfilling a unique purpose as an umbrella network and hub of activity to advance the practice of collaborative, place-based conservation at the necessary landscape scale. NLC is governed by a 34-person Coordinating Committee that is comprised of leaders from the nonprofit, private, public, academic, tribal, and philanthropic sectors across North America. The Network for Landscape Conservation is a fiscally sponsored project of the [Center for Large Landscape Conservation](#) in Bozeman, MT.

APPENDIX

Common Steps to Collaborative Landscape Conservation Success

Landscape Conservation Partnerships: Common Steps to Success	Partnership Stages		
	Starting	Building	Conserving
Conservation Objectives and Activities			
<p>Note: Partnerships form for different combinations of reasons, but generally focus on the long-term health of the identified region and conservation of the many ecosystem services that the landscape provides at both local and regional scales. This often includes a multidisciplinary, or holistic, approach that weaves in ecological health, cultural heritage, natural resource-based economics, health and recreation benefits, and/or other landscape values important to stakeholders.</p> <p>Although this chart depicts a clear line between conservation activities and partnership building, they are deeply integrated and interrelated. For example, “Partnership Building” activities listed below under #1, such as field trips and training, are also “conservation activities.” And the conservation planning activities listed here are also building the partnership.</p>	<p>Identify shared geography and discuss initial list of partners’ interests, concerns, goals, and priorities.</p> <p>Share stakeholder individual and collective experiences, expertise, and insights on the landscape.</p> <p>Identify shared vision, mission, goals, and next steps.</p>	<p>Share traditional ecological knowledge and other detailed stakeholder knowledge to fine tune goals and priorities.</p> <p>Map and prioritize this knowledge in combination with known data sets on ecological/cultural/other resources of concern through a conservation prioritization process.</p> <p>Craft a conservation/stewardship plan for the landscape. Develop a strategic action plan/list of strategic priorities.</p> <p>Identify and pursue “low hanging fruit” activities to advance conservation goals and to achieve early partnership successes.</p>	<p>Implement individual and/or collective strategies to achieve conservation goals per the strategic action plan and priorities.</p> <p>Continue to update landscape knowledge and fill identified gaps in understanding.</p> <p>Develop evaluation metrics and monitor progress of both partnership and on the ground conservation.</p> <p>Recalibrate strategies and activities to reflect lessons learned.</p> <p>Adapt, re-invent, and re-energize over time as necessary.</p>
Partnership Building			
<p>1. Stakeholder Convening and Outreach</p> <p>Note: Building a partnership starts with listening, learning, and trust building. It involves respectfully building a shared, inclusive, place-based conservation vision for a sustainable future. Regular convening is key. The time needed to build and sustain relationships should not be underestimated.</p>	<p>Convene core group of potential partners. Start to build relationships and trust with stakeholders and identify who else should be at the table.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to learn about partners’ interests, concerns, ideas, and experiences.</p> <p>Discuss initial ground rules, roles, and responsibilities.</p> <p>Be clear and transparent and ensure the effort will</p>	<p>Continue trust-building through regular convening, outreach, and authentic engagement.</p> <p>Reach out to new stakeholders (landowners, municipal officials, etc.) as needed. Who is missing?</p> <p>Identify outreach and partnership building activities that connect people to each other and to the landscape, and build support for the</p>	<p>Continue to nurture, build, and celebrate the partnership and stakeholder relationships.</p> <p>Celebrate successes.</p> <p>Plan for continuity and succession.</p>

	fill a need that does not already exist.	conservation objectives (e.g., field trips, skill building workshops and training, facilitated group discussions. Build upon/ celebrate individual partner contributions while building shared activities and understanding.	
<p>2. Internal and External Communications</p> <p>Note: Effective communications and storytelling should be woven into the partnership from the beginning. Internal communications are key to building shared understanding, commitment, and involvement. External communications and branding are key to expanding understanding, support, funding, and partnership involvement.</p>	<p>Weave authentic engagement and communications into partnership work from the beginning.</p> <p>Develop an attractive and compelling way to communicate the partnership’s vision and focal geography.</p> <p>Develop and sustain good internal communications products and protocols to keep people informed, connected, and involved.</p>	<p>Build effective external communications (e.g., website, e-news) to build support, connect with new audiences, learn from one another, and achieve goals.</p> <p>Develop outreach products and strategies for targeted audiences—including new and diverse stakeholders “beyond the choir.”</p> <p>Review and refine internal communications products and protocols.</p>	<p>Continue strategic outreach and develop new products (e.g., compelling case statements, media) to highlight and advance core messages and collaborative efforts.</p> <p>Give credit to all, showcasing successes and progress through storytelling, media, and other effective communications.</p>
<p>3. Structure and Governance</p> <p>Note: Even if one organization provides its “home,” (sometimes called the host partner or convening partner) the partnership should be neutral and a leadership or governance structure—whether formal or informal—should foster participatory engagement, and ensure that the partnership remains adaptive and responsive to the collective vision.</p>	<p>Identify lead organization(s), potential process, and commit to participatory governance (rather than a top-down process).</p> <p>Governance is more than a chart. Ensure that the partnership and any committees formed convene regularly and that there is the infrastructure needed to advance goals at and between convenings.</p>	<p>Formalize the partnership’s structure in a Charter, Memorandum of Understanding, Partnership Agreement or similar document.</p> <p>Develop steering committee, working groups, other structure as helpful (only as much as needed).</p> <p>Ensure that the partnership and any committees formed convene regularly and that there is the infrastructure needed to advance goals at and between convenings.</p>	<p>Review, discuss, and refine governance structures and processes as needed.</p> <p>Remain nimble and adapt to changes in leadership, participation, structure, and process as the long-term collaborative initiative grows and changes over time.</p>

<p>4. Staffing and Funding</p> <p>Note: Early funding should be secured for coordination/convening support and priority activities that advance partnership goals and demonstrate forward momentum. The partnership should over time devise and implement a funding plan that sustains the partnership and continues to advances its objectives.</p> <p>Designated conveners, and staff if/when hired, should focus on facilitation and partnership engagement, rather than decision-making.</p>	<p>Early partnership convening generally relies on the time of its partner organizations. A group should spend the time necessary to build trust, establish shared goals , and verify partnership value and viability before investing funding in a partnership.</p>	<p>Secure funding or partnership support for a designated part-time (or full-time) partnership coordinator.</p> <p>Identify and secure funding for priority activities.</p> <p>Focus on increasing the amount of resources available to the region overall.</p> <p>Clarify the partnership’s role in fundraising vis-à-vis the role of individual partner organizations to minimize competition for funding and duplication of efforts.</p> <p>Dedicate sufficient staff (or in-kind) time to fiscal and administrative duties to ensure sound business and management practices.</p>	<p>Review and refine the partnership’s funding strategy/business plan, with a focus on increasing the partnership’s financial sustainability.</p> <p>Maintain or Increase staff/contract capacity as needed.</p> <p>Continue to raise project-focused funding and to increase the amount of resources available to the partners overall.</p>
<p>Sources for this synthesis chart and additional resources for applicants include: 1) Page 13 and overall report: Pathways Forward: Progress and Priorities in Landscape Conservation, Network for Landscape Conservation 2018; 2) Page 19 and overall report: Enhancing the Partnership: Chesapeake Large Landscape Partnership Report: 25 Best Practices for Large Landscape Conservation Partnerships, NPS Chesapeake Bay Office 2013; 3) The Regional Conservation Partnership Handbook and 2-page summary of Steps to Success, Highstead Foundation 2015; 4) Network Models and Lesson from Across the U.S., Texas Hill Country Conservation Network 2017; and 5) The Santa Cruz Stewardship Network: A Regionwide, Cross-Sector Approach to Conservation: Converge for Impact 2018.</p>			