



CATALYST FUND Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated March 15, 2024

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What is the purpose of the Catalyst Fund?

The purpose of the Catalyst Fund is to accelerate the pace and practice of collaborative landscape conservation across the United States. The Fund makes strategic investments in strengthening the collaborative infrastructure and coordination capacity of place-based, community-grounded Landscape Partnerships. These investments are intended to better position Partnerships to achieve long-term conservation and stewardship success, building in landscapes across the country the enduring collaborative capacity needed to address systems-level challenges like the interwoven biodiversity, climate, and environmental injustice crises. More background on the Catalyst Fund purpose can be found in the appendix of the [Applicant Guidance Document](#).

What does ‘collaborative capacity’ mean?

We use the term ‘collaborative capacity’ to refer to those elements that allow groups of partners to work together effectively across organizational/entity boundaries and be able to function collectively to achieve a shared purpose. These are the elements or factors that allow a group of partners to successfully produce more impactful and durable conservation and stewardship outcomes than can arise from any single organization working on its own. A recently published [collaborative capacity framework](#) identifies six structural elements (collective purposes and goals; shared strategies and priorities; collaborative practices, skills and tools; systems and infrastructure; decision-making structures; and coordination capacity) and three binding elements (inclusive culture; meaningful relationships, and collaborative mindset). See the Section 2 of the [Applicant Guidance Document](#) for more background on this collaborative capacity framework.

What is the geographic emphasis of the Catalyst Fund?

The Fund welcomes proposals from Partnerships working in any landscape within the United States. Transboundary Landscape Partnerships that cross the U.S. border into Canada or Mexico are eligible to apply as well.

Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants must be U.S.-based non-profit organizations with approved IRS 501(c)(3) status. Tribal-led Partnerships throughout the United States are encouraged to apply, as a portion of the Fund is reserved for such Partnerships. Any Tribal-led Partnership may submit a proposal under IRS 501(c)(3) status. Additionally, eligibility for Tribal-led Partnerships expands in the American West, and federally-recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations under IRS Code, Section 7871 can apply directly as well. The American West is defined to include the following states: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.

What constitutes a “Tribal-led Partnership”?

The Catalyst Fund is committed to supporting Indigenous leadership in landscape conservation and stewardship, and welcomes proposals from Tribal-led Partnerships. Such Partnerships should emerge from and be supported by a Tribal government(s) and/or Indigenous community(s) within a landscape. The emphasis is on those Partnerships that are centered around Indigenous perspectives, interests, and power. This does not mean that such a Partnership needs to only include Tribal or Indigenous partners, but only Partnerships that are catalyzed by and emerging from Tribes (or designated departments/offices) and/or organizations that are governed or operated by Indigenous communities or community members should apply as Tribal-led Partnerships. We encourage all Partnerships to consider which Tribes and Indigenous communities have rights and interests within your landscape, and how you can begin to respectfully engage with and support those rights and interests; however, simply having a Tribal or Indigenous partner active within your Partnership does not mean it is a “Tribal-led Partnership.”

What if my Landscape Partnership does not have eligible IRS status?

A Landscape Partnership should apply directly if it has the appropriate IRS status. Many Partnerships do not have formal 501(c)(3) or Section 7871 IRS status, and another organization may apply *on behalf of* a Partnership. In such cases, the applicant organization may be a formal fiscal sponsor or a core partner organization within the Partnership.

Is my initiative well-aligned with the characteristics of Landscape Partnerships outlined in the RFP?

The Catalyst Fund RFP seeks Landscape Partnerships that reflect the following characteristics: place-based; long-term conservation purpose; collaboratively governed; community-grounded and inclusive; and informed. We recognize that there is a wide spectrum of landscape conservation and stewardship initiatives emerging and underway across the country, and not all initiatives—regardless of their broader importance or relevance—will align with these characteristics. A more detailed exploration of the Partnership characteristics is available in the [Applicant Guidance Document](#).

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What do you mean by “Partnership”?

The Catalyst Fund focuses its investments on Landscape Partnerships. “Partnership” does not indicate a focus on a fixed type of inter-organizational structure but rather is used as an umbrella term to represent a variety of differing structures and degrees of formality for individuals and entities coming together in collaboration to advance enduring conservation and stewardship. We consider requests from partnerships, collaboratives, networks, etc. The key aspect that we focus on is groups of partners coming together in ways that transcend individual organizations’ efforts and are working collaboratively toward a shared, long-term conservation and stewardship vision for a landscape. In other words, this is more than an organization “partnering” with others to achieve its own work; rather, it is the building of a shared vessel that will endure over time to allow partners to collectively work towards a shared vision for their landscape.

Is there a formal definition of who is (or is not) a partner—and how many partners does our Partnership need to be eligible to apply?

Partners within a Partnership are understood to be those individuals and organizations that are engaged in and committed to the shared conservation and stewardship vision and collaborative work therein. Each Partnership itself should define who its partners are, and the Catalyst Fund does not offer a formal criterion (for instance, an organization or individual does not necessarily have to be providing match support nor have a specific workplan task in this proposal to be called a partner). Partnerships may have a mix of differing partners too, with a core group of partners more deeply engaged and a broader group of more peripherally involved organizations. Please note that we are looking for Partnerships sufficiently robust in partner numbers that a broad range of interests and perspectives are engaged. While it is impossible to identify a concrete partner threshold (some landscapes have a high density of potential partners to work with whereas other landscapes may have a lower density of active organizations/community groups such that four or five partners would represent a significant number), Partnerships consisting of only a few organizations or individuals will generally not be competitive in the Catalyst Fund.

Can you explain what you consider a “landscape” to be?

We consider a landscape to be an interconnected geographic area that exceeds jurisdictional boundaries yet functions as and is perceived as a single unit because of ecological, geographical, cultural, and/or other social reasons. The Catalyst Fund does not set fixed parameters on size, or define how “large” a landscape needs to be. A landscape should be sufficiently large in scale to span parcel and political boundaries; encompass a diversity of landowner types, conservation issues, jurisdictions, and community and partner interests; and allow for conservation and stewardship impact at ecological scale—but specific and contained enough that a community-grounded approach is feasible, and people can work in ways that build enduring social capital within the geography. Further, landscapes can be in urban, suburban, rural, working, or wild in context—or any combination thereof. Landscapes also are

not necessarily discrete; in reality, landscapes often overlap and/or “nest” together, such that a smaller landscape can be identified as a unit within a much larger landscape.

How much funding may I request? And how many grants will be awarded?

Applicants may request a one- or two-year grant, but regardless of grant period the maximum funding request is \$25,000. Approximately \$335,000 in funding is available in 2024 for grantmaking, with 13-15 grant awards anticipated.

Can I submit for multiple applications?

A Landscape Partnership should only submit one proposal in any given Catalyst Fund funding round. An applicant that is a fiscal sponsor and/or partner in more than one Partnership may submit multiple proposals if each proposal is specific to a different Partnership. Landscape Partnerships are eligible to apply each year to the Catalyst Fund, but previous Catalyst Fund grant recipients currently are not eligible to reapply for additional grant support.

Are matching funds required?

A funding match of at least 1:1 is required. ***This match requirement is waived for Tribal-led Partnership applicants.***

In-kind support can contribute to this match requirement, but at least 50% of the minimum requirement must be direct support. Previously expended funds cannot be used as direct match. Direct match can be pending at time of application, but grant award will be dependent on securing appropriate match.

What can the funding be used for, and what are the funding restrictions?

The Catalyst Fund focuses on providing collaborative capacity investments that strengthen a Partnership’s ability to achieve its long-term conservation and stewardship goals. See the [Applicant Guidance Document](#) for more information on collaborative capacity. As such, funds may be used for staff or contract support for a Partnership coordination role(s) and/or costs associated with other collaborative process activities such as convenings, web and print communications, community and partner engagement, governance development, and strategic planning and conservation prioritization. Funding should not be requested for direct project implementation such as land acquisition, land management activities, or trail building. Funds cannot be used for academic research or writing; capital campaigns or capital improvements; or political lobbying.

How does the application process work?

The Catalyst Fund operates with an open-call, single-stage application process. Applicants will submit proposals through an [online application portal](#). Applicants who have difficulty navigating the online portal should contact the [Program Associate](#). Tribal-led Partnerships can, if preferred, complete a [Word form](#) proposal and submit it via email to [Sara Mosser](#).

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Do the character limits for application questions include spaces?

Yes, spaces count against the character limits for the narrative questions in the proposal form. A buffer has been intentionally built into character limits to offer some degree of flexibility, as we don't believe it is productive or beneficial to use valuable time in editing slightly longer responses to fit within precise character limits.

When are the proposals due and when will I hear back?

Catalyst Fund proposals are due by Friday, April 26. Grant awards will be finalized in August 2024.

How can I check on the status of my application?

All submissions to the Catalyst Fund will receive emailed acknowledgement. If you submit a proposal but do not receive email notification, please contact the [Program Associate](#) to confirm successful submission. You can access your applicant profile on our online application portal at any time to review the history and status of your submissions. However, note that status updates will not be posted until the entire proposal review process is completed, at which point all applicants will receive email notification of their status (in August).

Who manages the Fund?

The Catalyst Fund is a program of the Network for Landscape Conservation. The Network is a fiscally sponsored project of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC). As such, applicants and awarded grantees work directly with NLC staff on all aspects of the Catalyst Fund, yet grant agreements will be executed between grantees and CLLC and grant funds are dispersed by CLLC.

Who evaluates the grant proposals?

A Catalyst Fund program committee comprised of collaborative landscape conservation and stewardship practitioners from across the country and representing multiple sectors and perspectives has been assembled to evaluate all proposals and make grant award recommendations.

What does the Peer Learning component of the Catalyst Fund look like?

The field of collaborative landscape conservation and stewardship is continually growing and evolving: experience suggests that there is great value in practitioners connecting to learn from one another. In that vein, we invite funded Partnerships to identify a leadership representation (e.g. Partnership coordinator or steering committee member) to participate in a Peer Learning cohort as part of the Catalyst Fund grant award. Over two years, the cohort will convene monthly via virtual means for shared learning, exchange, exploration, inspiration, and support. Conditions permitting, the cohort will also convene annually in person (travel funding to be provided by the Network). Network staff and leadership will also be available to help with problem-solving, providing background resources, and/or connecting grantees to other

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practitioners wrestling with similar issues. This Peer Learning component is intended to be a resource for grantees to benefit from as they continue to build collaborative efforts within their landscapes; the hope is that this capacity-building investment further strengthens the funded Partnerships, better positioning them to achieve their long-term landscape visions.

If awarded, what is the disbursement schedule for grants? Are grant funds provided up front or as a reimbursement?

For one-year grants, 100% of the funding will be provided upon signing of the grant agreement. For two-year grants, the typical disbursement schedule is 50% of the grant award upon signing of the grant agreement, with the remaining 50% of the grant award disbursed at the start of the second year (upon submission of a brief interim report). However, the main focus is on working with grantees to put them in position to be successful, and we are open to alternative disbursement schedules as appropriate.

We applied unsuccessfully last year; should we reapply this year and can we resubmit the same proposal again?

In short, yes, applicants should consider reapplying again if they remain a strong fit with the parameters of the Fund as outlined in the RFP. The [Applicant Guidance Document](#) remains a resource for helping applicants determine if they are an appropriate fit for the Fund and how best to present a compelling and competitive request. Applicants are welcome to submit a request for the same need/purpose as in previous submissions (assuming that need/purpose remains), and should feel free to repurpose portions of their past proposals as helpful in answering the proposal narrative questions. You should be able to access past proposals via your dashboard on the [Catalyst Fund online application portal](#) to expedite copying and pasting from past submissions.

What are the reporting requirements for grantees?

Grantees will be asked to provide a short written report at the conclusion of the grant period, to be accompanied by a very simple financial report. Additionally, two-year grants will be asked to submit a very brief interim report at the one-year mark. In the final reports, grantees will be asked to document how the Catalyst Fund grant was spent and evaluate its impact. Additionally, the Network may track progress of funded Partnerships for up to five years after the grant period through a short survey.

What is the source of funding for the Catalyst Fund?

Funding for the Catalyst Fund has been made available through the generous support of the Doris Duke Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

How do I find out more or talk to someone about the Fund?

We encourage you to read the RFP carefully, and to review the [Applicant Guidance Document](#). Additionally, an informational webinar is scheduled for [Tuesday, March 26, 2024](#) to provide an

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opportunity for interested applicants to ask questions. A recording of the webinar will be added to the [Catalyst Fund page](#) on the Network’s website upon completion. Finally, Network staff will be available for questions via email *after* your careful review of the RFP, the Applicant Guidance Document, and the webinar. To connect, email [Sara Mosser](#) and indicate “Catalyst Fund RFP Question” in the subject line of your email.

What is the Network for Landscape Conservation?

Founded in 2011, the [Network for Landscape Conservation](#) connects people to ideas and innovations—and to each other—in order to build a community of practice for the rapidly growing field of landscape conservation and stewardship. The Network 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 250 organizational partners and nearly 6,000 practitioners, fulfilling a unique purpose as an umbrella network and hub of activity to advance the practice of collaborative, place-based conservation and stewardship at the necessary landscape scale. The Network is governed by a 35-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](#).

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