

THE PETER AND CARMEN LUCIA BUCK FOUNDATION, INC.



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Land and Easement Acquisition Program (LEAP)

Program Description

The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation's (PCLB) Outdoors Program seeks to increase the pace of land conservation, protect critical habitat, contribute to climate resilience, and connect people to nature. To advance these goals, PCLB established the Land and Easement Acquisition Program (LEAP) that provides grants for land conservation organizations to complete projects in the Hudson River and Lake Champlain Watersheds in New York and in select areas in Maine. LEAP grants are intended to close funding gaps for active projects that are otherwise ready to close. Funds can be used to acquire land and conservation easements. Priority will be given to projects that:

- Interconnect open space.
- Promote biodiversity.
- Address climate resilience.
- Protect high-quality water resources.
- Provide meaningful public access opportunities.

Submissions are limited to one project per organization per year. Exceptions may be possible at the discretion of PCLB.

LEAP grants can be used for:

- Acquisition of land in fee or conservation easements.
- Transaction costs are limited to appraisals, title binders, environmental assessments, surveys, legal fees, recording fees, transfer fees, and property taxes to year end.

LEAP grants cannot be used for:

- Staff costs and organizational overhead.
- Stewardship endowments.
- Repayment of loans.

Eligibility

- The organization must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
- The organization must be a member of the Land Trust Alliance.
- The organization must be accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission or be on the path to accreditation within two years.
- The project must be located entirely or predominantly (minimum 50% of land area) within the eligible project areas (*see below for maps; click to download GIS shape files for [New York](#) and [Maine](#)*).
- The project must result in the permanent protection of land through acquisition and retention by the land trust; pass-through to a partner entity with a mission to permanently protect land (e.g., a state agency or a tribe); or a permanent conservation easement held by the applicant, partner, or assignee.
- The organization may partner with local governments, tribes, or community-based organizations on the project. However, all grant funds would go to the applicant.
- The organization must have adequate plans for monitoring the acquisition after closing and, if applicable, maintaining public access.
- The project must close within one (1) year of receiving a grant award. Extensions will be considered only under extenuating circumstances.

LEAP Grant Process

1. **Express interest.** Organizations email PCLB (*see contact below*) to introduce eligible projects.
2. **Attend follow-up meeting.** All inquiring organizations will be invited to a follow-up meeting to discuss the project(s) in more detail. At this meeting, the organization should be prepared to review as much of the Required Project Information outlined below as available. The follow-up meeting must be completed by June 15.
3. **INVITATION ONLY: Submit required project information for pre-application.** If a project aligns with LEAP's goals, the organization will be invited to submit the Required Project Information. This information will be used to evaluate and compare projects across interested organizations. The pre-application materials must be submitted by June 30.
4. **INVITATION ONLY: Submit formal application.** A limited number of organizations will be invited to submit a formal application to PCLB in late July or early August. Applications are due by the end of August.
5. Grants are awarded in November, pending PCLB Board approval. Funding is not guaranteed for any project.

Required Project Information

Required Project Information outlined below will be collected via Google Form provided during step three.

- An overview of your project (e.g., physical attributes, unique ecological characteristics, planned restoration activities, known issues that could impede project completion).
- "Table 1 – Project Scoring Sheet" (*see below for reference only*).
- A context map showing the project's location at a scale of 1:24,000.
- A site-specific project map displaying ecologically important areas, areas of terrestrial resilience, streams, surface water bodies, and wetlands. The map(s) may be on a topographic or photographic base, depending on which is more useful in understanding the nature of the project.
- GIS shape files.
- Project budget, including an itemized list of all project costs, sources of funding, status of funding sources, and the project's unfunded need.
- Appraisal requirements: if land value is less than \$500,000, one appraisal; if land value is between \$500,000 and \$1 million, one appraisal and a review appraisal; if land value is over \$1 million, two appraisals.
- Any environmental assessments performed.
- Title commitment.
- Signed purchase agreement (can be a purchase contract, contingency contract, or option agreement).

Projects will be evaluated based on their score, along with other relevant factors such as readiness, cost-share, public benefit, and the organization's capacity to complete the acquisition and proposed post-closing management. The PCLB Foundation is the final arbiter of project eligibility and worthiness.

PCLB LEAP Contact

The PCLB Foundation
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Table 1 – Project Scoring Sheet

Project Characteristics	Qualifying Criteria	Additional Instructions	Score
Project size		Project > 200 acres - Project = 50 to 200 acres - Project < 50 acres -	3 2 1
Proximity to other conserved land	The site is adjacent to or near other conserved land.	Adjoins open space - Across a road - Within ½ mile -	3 2 1
Recognized biodiversity (use one of the three options below)	If the TNC model (option 1) does not include the site, state data (option 2) can be used. If state data does not include the site, site-specific data (option 3) can be used.	Use one of the three scoring options below.	
<u>Option 1</u> : Nationally designated biodiversity	The site includes biodiversity value in The Nature Conservancy’s Resilient Land Mapping Tool	https://www.maps.tnc.org/resilientland/#/explore	3
<u>Option 2</u> : State designated biodiversity	The site contains a New York State <i>Significant Natural Community</i> or a Maine <i>Focus Area of Ecological Statewide Significance</i> .	NYS: https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/biodiversity-species-conservation/biodiversity-mapping/environmental-resource-mapper ME: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/focusarea/index.htm	2
<u>Option 3</u> : Site-specific evidence of important natural community	Applicants may submit a narrative and any data to demonstrate that it has site-specific data indicating presence of rare communities.	Submit separate documentation	1
Public access	Project will provide public access for passive recreation.	Describe in project narrative	2
Water quality protection	The site includes New York State Class N, AA-S, A-S, AA, or A fresh surface waters; or Maine Class AA or A fresh surface waters and/or Class SA estuarine and marine waters.	For NYS, reference the DEC Resource Mapper linked above. ME: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d74a8708950c4bc184c3cb031f8dcd93	2
Drinking water protection	The site borders a drinking water reservoir.	The site is part of reservoir boundary.	1
Development threat	There is a formal or active proposal to develop the property for residential or commercial use.	Provide site plan(s).	1
Restoration	A plan is in place to restore the site or areas of the site to enhance its ecological value.	Describe any such plan(s) in project narrative.	1
		Total Score	

Appendix A – Map of Eligible Project Area in New York



Appendix B – Map of Eligible Project Area in Maine

