



Search for the Chief Executive Officer Land Trust Alliance

THE SEARCH

The Land Trust Alliance (“the Alliance”), a national leader and voice for private land conservation, seeks a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

With over four decades of leadership in conservation, the Alliance supports a membership base of nearly 1,000 independent and community-based land trusts with over six million collective supporters. Together, they have protected over 61 million acres of land across the United States. Whether through private conservation, like natural land or agricultural easements, or by purchasing land, land trusts provide places that provide clean water and air, habitat for wildlife, food and fiber, climate resilience, and places to connect with nature and our cultural heritage.

Land conservation remains a unifying priority and of growing interest, underscoring the enduring relevance of the Alliance’s mission to save the places people need and love. The Alliance accomplishes this by empowering and mobilizing land trusts in communities across America to conserve land — and connect people to the land — for the benefit of all. The Alliance’s work is rooted in the belief that real change is made by people.

The Alliance seeks a bold, visionary leader to articulate an ambitious strategy to empower land trusts to accelerate the protection of the nation’s vital lands. To do so, the Alliance must help defend the progress already made, strengthen member land trusts, and engage new and underrepresented communities in the conservation movement.

As the leader of a nonpartisan organization with considerable influence on federal conservation policy and funding, the CEO will also have an unparalleled opportunity to mobilize the Alliance’s grassroots constituency to advocate for land protection and accelerate private land conservation. With most of the land in the U.S. in private hands, private land conservation presents a significant opportunity to address pressing challenges, including loss of biodiversity, fragmentation, maintaining resiliency, loss of livelihoods, and access to nature.

Reporting to a 20-member Board of Directors, the CEO will manage approximately ninety staff nationwide and oversee an annual operating budget of nearly \$25 million. The successful candidate will be a dedicated, results-oriented leader and spokesperson with consummate skills in fundraising, partnership development, and organizational management. This leader will bring a passion for conservation and the ability to galvanize and expand a constituency of partners and supporters to secure a permanent legacy of protected lands for future generations.

A six-member board/staff search committee has been appointed to conduct this search. The Land Trust Alliance is working with Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, for this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Land Trust Alliance has been a cornerstone of the private land conservation movement for over 40 years. It has been instrumental in empowering and growing the land trust community into the powerhouse it is today.

Initially incorporated as the Land Trust Exchange in 1982 and renamed the Land Trust Alliance in 1990, the organization was established to provide a unified voice in advocating for legislation concerning federal tax deductibility of conservation easements, increasing land trust capacity, and creating a sense of community. The Alliance's newsletter (initially called Exchange) began publication in 1982 for land conservation practitioners. In the first year, the organization also formed a task force on easement appraisals, grew to serve its rapidly expanding network of community-based land trusts, and developed publications, technical assistance programs, and convenings to support its members and the field. It developed [Land Trust Standards and Practices](#) and initiated national surveys to document conservation easements across the country. Hosting the first National Land Conservation Conference in 1985 further solidified its role as a leader and convenor for private land conservation.

Throughout its history, the Land Trust Alliance has continued to adapt and expand its influence through key programming and initiatives, such as the creation of the [Land Trust Accreditation Commission](#) in 2006. The Land Trust Alliance formed [Terrafirma](#) in 2011 as a charitable risk pool owned by participating land trusts that insures its members against the legal costs of defending conservation and established the Community Conservation Program in 2013 to expand the scope of land conservation. Legislative victories, such as securing permanent enhanced tax incentives for conservation easements in 2015, highlight the Alliance's ongoing commitment to advocacy and policy advancement for the land trust community.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Andrew Bowman has led the Land Trust Alliance since 2016, following a successful career in conservation funding, law, and nonprofit management. Under Bowman's leadership, the Alliance has embraced a community-centered approach to private land conservation (including the Common Ground initiative and establishing the Community-Centered Conservation Department), strengthened its programmatic enterprise (including the Land and Climate Program), and guided the conservation community to significant legislative triumphs (including increasing federal conservation funding and enhancing the integrity of federal tax incentives for conservation easement donations.) More recently, this work has led to deep collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to streamline funding for the conservation of working lands. Internally, Bowman built a strong leadership team and invested in technology infrastructure to support the Alliance's next chapter. After eight years of effective leadership,

Bowman leaves a dedicated and nationally recognized organization poised for its next phase of growth and impact.

Looking ahead, the Alliance seeks to catalyze land trusts' protection of an additional 60 million acres by the end of the decade, further empowering existing members and engaging a broader spectrum of individuals, communities, organizations, and sectors that have not traditionally engaged in conservation efforts but share a vested interest in preserving vital lands.

GOVERNANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Alliance is governed by a 20-member Board of Directors comprising fifteen members and five officers. The board comes from all parts of the country and represents many aspects of the community. Officer roles include a Chair, two Vice-Chairs, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Board members may serve up to three three-year terms, with officers serving one year in each officer position. The Executive Committee consists of ten members: the five elected officers, committee chairs, and the CEO, who serves as a non-voting ex officio member. The Board is further supported by various sub-committees that oversee critical functions of the Alliance, including Governance, Finance & Investment, Audit, Government Relations, Development, and Program Committees.

Rooted in its core principles as a member-serving organization, the Alliance remains committed to operating with unwavering integrity to maintain public trust. The Alliance convenes a Land Trust Leadership Council, an advisory group dedicated to providing a brain trust of established, innovative, and diverse land trust leaders. Composed of roughly fifty executive directors from high performing land trusts and state associations from across the country, the Council acts as a vibrant forum for conservation leaders to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and spearhead new strategies to seize opportunities facing the land trust community. Members are appointed by the CEO for three-year renewable terms, ensuring sustained leadership and continuous innovation in meeting these challenges.

The Alliance also convenes a Conservation Defense Advisory Council composed of dedicated conservation attorneys, practitioners, and board members. The Council provides recommendations to enhance and implement the Alliance's conservation defense initiatives and also plays a crucial role in facilitating discussions and fostering collaboration with the broader land trust community on legal matters related to conservation easements. The Council convenes quarterly, with one session strategically aligned with the Alliance's annual Rally conference, further enhancing engagement and unity among members, affiliates, and donors.

ORGANIZATION

The Land Trust Alliance comprises over ninety staff distributed across the country and is supported by a seven-member Executive Management team. This team includes a Chief Program Officer, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Chief Operating and Financial Officer, Vice President of Development, Vice President of Conservation Initiatives, Director of Community-Centered Conservation, and Vice President of Education. This distributed structure enables the Alliance to understand and address the unique

conservation challenges faced by land trusts while leveraging the resources and expertise of a national organization.

Per the last strategic plan, the Alliance's work is divided into four key roles: Capacity building, Advocacy, Collaborative Leadership, and Convening and includes the following programs:

Member Support and Training: The Education, Conservation Initiatives, and Community-Centered Conservation departments play crucial roles in supporting and training the Alliance's member organizations. The Education Department enhances land trusts' organizational performance through specialized training, comprehensive educational resources, and guidance on [Land Trust Standards and Practices](#). This department also organizes the annual [National Land Conservation Conference: Rally](#), which provides in-person training, workshops, and discussions to the land trust community on various conservation topics. According to Alliance members, one of the most powerful and valued aspects of Rally is the opportunity to connect with others to build the community. The Conservation Initiatives Department, the Alliance's field services division, delivers on-the-ground training, technical assistance, capacity building, and educational services to help land trusts become more sustainable, professional, and valued organizations within their communities. The Community-Centered Conservation (CCC) Department focuses on advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices within the conservation field to make land conservation accessible to all. By fostering relationships and aligning conservation priorities with historically excluded communities, including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities, the CCC plays a crucial role in ensuring all people can engage and benefit from the conservation efforts of land trusts.

Standards & Practices and Accreditation: The Alliance actively promotes excellence in land conservation by publishing the [Land Trust Standards and Practices](#), providing technical assistance, and offering training to help land trusts achieve and maintain accreditation. The new CEO will have the opportunity to oversee the next version of the Standards and Practices which provides an opportunity to shape and strengthen the future of the field. The [Land Trust Accreditation Commission](#), a supporting program of the Alliance, oversees the accreditation process. The Commission's mission is to inspire excellence, promote public trust, and ensure the permanent conservation of open lands by accrediting land trusts that meet stringent quality standards and are committed to continuous improvement. Governed by an eighteen-member volunteer commissioner board from across the country and supported by a dedicated staff of nine, the Commission adheres to the standards and practices set by the Alliance and approved by the Alliance Board. This ensures that land trusts operate ethically and sustainably, with a commitment to long-term accountability and conservation permanence. The CEO and Alliance board work in close partnership with the Commission to address issues that may arise during the accreditation process and, conversely, to ensure that the Alliance's Standards and Practices continues to guide and support the Commission's work effectively.

Advocacy and Outreach: The Government Relations Department champions the organization's policy and advocacy agenda, drawing on the collective power of the land trust community to shape and advance the federal policy priorities of its membership. The department, recognized as a leading authority in private land conservation policy, operates with a nonpartisan approach that has been key to securing legislative

victories, such as increased Farm Bill conservation funding in the Inflation Reduction Act. Close collaboration with land trusts, including the Alliance's Washington, DC fly-in Advocacy Days, a Farm Bill Working Group, Energy and Climate Working Group and on-going Advocacy Training, ensures that a unified voice resonates powerfully on the national stage, amplifying each land trust's commitment to safeguarding our natural heritage.

The Alliance further elevates these priorities through its strategic communications and outreach efforts. In addition to developing the Alliance's overarching message, the Strategic Communications Department works to cultivate public support for land trusts and the broader mission of land conservation. A critical effort in this endeavor is the [Gaining Ground](#) campaign, an outreach initiative designed to attract and engage new supporters for private land conservation. Launched in 2023, the campaign seeks to educate and mobilize Americans to act on the environmental issues they care deeply about.

Conservation Defense: In addition to providing training and education services, the Alliance also provides a robust Conservation Defense program that helps protect land trusts from threats that endanger conserved lands. The perpetual nature of land conservation and the growing amount of protected land brings with it a growing responsibility to defend that land forever. The program's Conservation Defense Fund further empowers partners by providing litigation support, often filing amicus briefs for various cases.

The Land Trust Alliance formed Terrafirma in 2011 as a charitable risk pool owned by participating land trusts that insures its members against the legal costs of defending conservation. While established by the Alliance, it is not owned or controlled by the organization. Managed by Alliance Risk Management Services LLC, an Alliance affiliate organization, Terrafirma supports a broad array of risk management education, stewardship support, volunteer support, and claims handling. This comprehensive support structure ensures that land trusts have the necessary tools to navigate the evolving easements landscape while continuing to meet its promises of perpetuity.

To learn more about all of the Alliance's programs, please visit: <https://landtrustalliance.org/what-we-do/our-programs>.

FINANCE

The Alliance anticipates an operating budget of nearly \$25M for FY24. Approximately 25% of revenues will come from membership dues, conferences, and event fees, with gifts and grants expected to account for the remaining 75%. The Alliance currently has a long-term reserve balance of \$4M and an endowment of roughly \$6M to support the accreditation program. In recent years, the Alliance operated with a \$1M annual deficit to cover programmatic expenses and utilized reserves to invest in a full technology upgrade. The FY24 budget will draw approximately \$1.1M from reserve funds to complete this digital transformation. While now operating with a balanced budget, the Alliance expects to meet increased demand for proven programs, such as leadership development, and expand the reach of its community conservation work through additional unrestricted fundraising. It also intends to establish a significant operating endowment.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Land Trust Alliance recognizes that real change is made by people. Therefore, the Alliance provides expertise, guidance, national perspective and a suite of supportive services to set land trusts on a path for success. In order to do so, the Land Trust Alliance plays multiple roles. As an association, it delivers high-quality services tailored to meet the needs of its diverse membership. As a national organization, it gives voice to the land trust community, celebrating and advancing the field's vital contributions to land conservation. As a conservation leader, it actively shapes the landscape of future land conservation through its policy and advocacy efforts. In short, the Alliance represents a set of conservation efforts and ideas that draw support from all parts of the country, and which benefit all Americans.

As with all associations, this multifaceted role creates some tension in defining and striking the appropriate balance between service and leadership. Many Alliance members look first and foremost for technical assistance, education, leadership training, accreditation, and conservation defense support that aligns with their needs. Members pay dues for these services, and their priority is to have the services effectively and efficiently delivered. Other members value more the Alliance's unique leadership role on behalf of the field and the standards it upholds. Ultimately, most members agree that good leadership is predicated on good service delivery and that both are essential roles for the organization.

To succeed in all respects of the Alliance's mission and vision, the next CEO should demonstrate leadership skills based on collaboration, transparency, and consensus building to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Develop and articulate a compelling vision and strategy for the Land Trust Alliance's future

The Alliance's last [strategic plan](#) ran from 2018-2023, and was extended through 2025 based on a Board approved operating plan. In addition to completing the organization's existing strategic priorities, the next CEO will work in partnership with the Board to develop a new multi-year strategic plan and coalesce the organization around shared goals and strategies for the future. The leader will collaborate closely with staff, Board, and members to create and communicate a strong, unified value proposition that unites and inspires the land trust community, funders, and other stakeholders; underpinned by a sustainable business model.

Catalyze members through impactful programming and services

With its focus on private land conservation, the Alliance serves a diverse set of land trusts that protect places including working lands, watersheds, viewsheds, cultural landscapes, as well as places dedicated to engaging the community. The Alliance offers a comprehensive suite of high-quality programs and services designed to meet the unique legal, technical, and accreditation needs of its diverse membership. The Alliance has grown and continues to grow exceptional conservation leaders who are having impacts far beyond the fence line. As member needs have evolved, the Alliance has responded in kind by expanding its programming. This adaptative approach, while necessary, also requires that programs be systematically assessed. With the opportunity to help develop a new strategic plan, the incoming CEO will work closely with field and program staff, as well as the Executive Management Team, to establish an

ongoing evaluation of programs. Over time, this review will focus on refining the Alliance's offerings, enhancing service delivery, and articulating a clear value proposition for its programming.

Cultivate support and expand financial capacity through fundraising

The Alliance's core programming and operations are primarily supported by a mix of government, foundation, and individual donor funding in addition to membership dues. The organization currently has strong public funding and private grants. Still, it will require increased unrestricted funding to implement a bold strategic plan, continue to provide resources and support to advance the work of its membership, and ensure the organization's long-term financial sustainability. In the coming years, the Alliance plans to launch its most significant fundraising campaign since 2015 to increase revenue for member support and establish an endowment to protect existing conservation through its defense programming. The next CEO will take a leading role in this effort as a dynamic spokesperson articulating a heart-felt and powerful vision for the Alliance's future and be someone that derives joy and energy from working with donors.

Engage externally with key policymakers, government partners, and the media

Many of the Alliance's most enduring funding and advocacy partnerships are based at the federal level. The incoming CEO will focus on strengthening and expanding these relationships by engaging key policymakers and deftly navigating political divisions to advance private land conservation goals. This effort will include building essential coalitions that bridge the rural-urban divide and addressing regional disparities to advance state-level conservation efforts that are in sync with the grassroots work of its members. Additionally, the CEO will cultivate deeper relationships with key government agencies, such as the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Agriculture, to effectively advocate for the needs of the Alliance's members on critical issues such as permanent tax easements and legislation that affects private land conservation. The Alliance must maintain these deep working relationships to position land conservation as a funding priority and the Alliance as a subject matter expert that effectively represents its members and the broader land conservation community on federal conservation issues.

Expand the Alliance's network of conservation concerned

The Alliance is recognized for its commitment to its diverse membership base and its nonpartisan approach to advocacy. As it continues to expand its influence, the Alliance seeks to strengthen its ties with existing members and affiliates while engaging a broader range of stakeholders. The CEO will leverage the Alliance's national platform to mobilize a wider audience coined the "conservation concerned" – those interested in conservation but not yet actively engaged in its work. This effort is reflected in the organization's rollout of the Gaining Ground campaign. Through the new leader's outreach and the organization's community conservation work, the CEO will prioritize fostering relationships with communities historically underrepresented or excluded from the conservation movement, including Tribal Nations. This effort will create a broader, more inclusive, and resilient ecosystem of partners and supporters with shared ambitions for sustainable impact.

Build the Alliance's organizational vitality and capacity

The Alliance has grown significantly over the last 10-15 years. As the landscape of conservation work becomes more complex, the Alliance will need to strengthen its organizational capacity. This includes improved internal management systems and processes to streamline its efforts. Currently, the organization is embracing a digital transformation that will fortify these systems and introduce new capabilities essential for advancing its programs and fundraising initiatives. The incoming CEO will work closely with the Executive Management Team to oversee this digital transformation and develop and refine best practices for leveraging these digital tools.

Additionally, the CEO will cultivate a connected and inclusive organization where staff are supported and recognized for their contributions to the Alliance's overall success. The CEO will ensure organizational cohesion even as its staff operates across diverse geographies. In nurturing an environment where staff feel connected and motivated to advance the Alliance's mission, the CEO will affirm the organization's dedication to living its values and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of its conservation efforts.

QUALIFICATIONS & CHARACTERISTICS

The next CEO will possess many, if not all, of the following professional qualifications, skills, and experiences:

- Passion for conservation and a commitment to private land conservation. The ability to effectively represent the conservation movement while navigating inherent tensions in conservation work;
- Successful track record of providing strategic thinking and leadership that connects vision to implementation of core programming and measurable impact of outcomes, underpinned by a sustainable business model;
- Proven fundraising expertise that underscores the vital interplay between relationship building, cultivation, passion for the organization's mission, and a collaborative team approach;
- Dynamic communication skills with a proven record of representing the conservation movement to diverse audiences, inspiring confidence, engagement, and partnership; including through speaking engagements, public hearings, and the media.
- Ability to work with senior policy makers and legislators on both sides of the aisle to move conservation forward;
- Track record of providing motivational leadership and effective management of a talented and diverse team that is geographically dispersed, as well as in building teams to complement existing strengths;
- Capacity to lead a membership organization;
- Experience building productive partnerships and strategic alliances with a diverse array of stakeholders, including a Board of Directors, to further the goals of the organization;

- Experience in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion and working with underrepresented communities to further conservation impact and benefits ([see the Alliance's Values statement here](#));
- A diplomatic and inclusive approach to understanding and holding varying perspectives and to effective problem-solving;
- Outstanding listening skills. Humility, compassion, integrity, and authenticity in leadership.

LOCATION

The location for this position is flexible, with a preference for the Washington, DC, area. Significant travel is expected to engage with donors, government officials, member organizations, and staff (most of the senior leadership roles are based out of the Washington, DC headquarters).

SALARY

Compensation is expected to be in the range of \$400,000 – \$500,000, through a combination of base salary and bonus, depending on location. A comprehensive benefits package is also included.

TO APPLY

The Land Trust Alliance has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Review of candidates will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. All nominations, inquiries, and applications, including a resume and a letter of interest, should be sent in confidence to:

Andrew Lee, Managing Partner
Damla Williams, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

1800 K Street, NW, Suite 750 Washington, DC 20036

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/land-trust-alliance/chief-executive-officer>

The Land Trust Alliance's mission is to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Land Trust Alliance is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or marital status.