

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Florida Communities Trust Program Grant Application Instructions

Introduction

Florida Communities Trust's (FCT) Parks and Open Space grant program is a state land acquisition grant program that provides funding to Local Governments and eligible Nonprofit Environmental Organizations for acquisition of community-based parks, open spaces and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs identified in Local Government comprehensive plans. The program was created by statutory authority in Chapter 380, Florida Statutes (F.S.) and is governed by Chapters 62-818 and 82-819, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

The preservation of green spaces, including parks, open spaces, beaches and natural areas, is an important factor in creating livable communities. Florida Communities Trust continues to assist communities in land acquisition for conservation and recreation. Matching and full grants for land acquisition projects are provided to communities through an annual competitive application cycle.

Florida Communities Trust provides Local Governments and Nonprofit Environmental Organizations the opportunity to leverage local dollars with state dollars, optimizing conservation benefits. Florida Communities Trust encourages and fosters both public and public-private partnerships in land acquisition initiatives.

Fiscal Year 2016-17 Funding

The Florida Legislature awarded \$10 million in funding for FCT projects with funds becoming available July 1, 2016. Pursuant to the 2016 amendments to the statutes that govern FCT, the funds allocated to FCT projects for the acquisition of conservation or recreation lands **must** be used to enhance recreational opportunities for individuals with unique abilities. The 2016 amendments to the statutes that govern FCT are contained in Chapter 2016-62 of the Laws of Florida. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) **may** waive the Local Government matching fund requirements for projects enhancing recreational opportunities for individuals with unique abilities.

Unique Abilities Project Requirement

Eligible projects submitted for funding in Fiscal Year 2016-17 must “provide accessibility, availability or adaptability of conservation or recreation lands for individuals with unique abilities which will incorporate adaptations or modifications to the design and development of recreational resources or equipment to meet the needs of all potential participants including those with physical or developmental disabilities,” pursuant to the 2016 amendments to Section 380.507 of the Florida Statutes. This requirement will expire July 1, 2017.

Please provide specific, detailed documentation on how your Project Site will fulfill this legislative directive in the Project Summary and Project Excellence sections of the application. All applications received for Fiscal Year 2016-17 funding, must demonstrate projects that enhance recreational opportunities for individuals with unique abilities or will be deemed ineligible.

For additional information on accessibility and project design, you may choose to review the following resources available online:

- [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design -- The 7 Principles](http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/)
- [National Center on Accessibility](http://www.ncaonline.org/)
- [Center for Universal Design -- Universal Design Principles](https://www.ncsu.edu/www/ncsu/design/sod5/cud/about_ud/udprinciples.htm)
- [Florida Building Code 5th Edition \(2014\) Accessibility](http://codes.iccsafe.org/app/book/toc/2014/Florida/Accessibility%20Code/index.html)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations](http://www.ada.gov/reg2010/titleII_2010/titleII_2010_regulations.pdf)

Project and Application Overview

This guide contains instructions for completing Application Form FCT-5. Please review all instructions before preparing the application. **Do not alter the application’s original language or format.** Type responses directly on the form using “insert” mode to prevent lines from shifting. The original application must include a **transmittal letter** on Local Government or Nonprofit letterhead signed by the appropriate official or administrator. The transmittal letter must identify the key contact person and include a statement binding the applicant to fulfill all the commitments made in the application. Partnership applications must include a transmittal letter from each Partner.

EXAMPLE

Acquisition Type

- **Pre-acquired:** Check this block if the entire Project Site has been acquired by the Applicant through a voluntarily-negotiated transaction within 24 months prior to the application deadline. Provide copies of signed closing statements for each parcel on Exhibit P. If a closing statement is not available by the application deadline, include a copy of the contract for each parcel. FCT must receive copies of closing statements within 14 days after the application deadline.
- **Partial Pre-acquired:** Check this block if a portion of the Project Site has been acquired by the Applicant through a voluntarily-negotiated transaction within 24 months prior to the application deadline. Provide copies of signed closing statements for each parcel on Exhibit P. If a closing statement is not available by the application deadline, include a copy of the contract for each parcel. FCT must receive copies of closing statements within 14 days after the application deadline pursuant to Rule 62-818.004(7)(p), F.A.C. If you check this block, please remember to check either the reimbursement or joint acquisition blocks depending on how the rest of the Project Site will be acquired.
- **Reimbursement Acquisition:** Check this block if the entire Project Site or remaining portion of the Project Site will be acquired by the Applicant through a voluntarily-negotiated transaction after the application deadline and will request reimbursement from FCT after the acquisition is completed.
- **Joint:** Check this block if the entire Project Site or remaining un-acquired parcel(s) will be acquired by the Applicant and FCT together through a voluntarily-negotiated transaction and provide the number of separate ownerships within the Project Site. Rule

62-818.003(10)(b), F.A.C. requires the Applicant to act as the party responsible for acquisition activities for Project Sites that consist of eleven or more ownerships to be jointly acquired with FCT.

Preparing an Application

Well prepared applications are key to project selection. The applicant may choose to use an experienced team of professionals or knowledgeable volunteers to assist with preparation of the application. The team should include individuals with experience in comprehensive planning, real estate, historic and natural resource protection, land management and recreation facility development. Responses to questions may be typed directly on the application form in a "typeover" mode to prevent lines from shifting. Additional pages may be used, if necessary. Do not alter the original language or format of the application form (i.e., section headings, subsection headings and criteria).

Eligible Applicants

Local Governments and Nonprofit Environmental Organizations that are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code are eligible to apply for funding.

Award Limits

Eligible applicants may submit multiple applications, as long as the combination of awards applied for does not exceed \$5 million. Awards requested in a partnership application are divided equally among the partners for the purposes of calculating individual applicant limits. However, the project will not be funded if the Applicant has 3 or more active Grant Agreements at the time of project selection. The Applicant may close out active Grant Agreements prior to project selection to regain eligibility pursuant to Rule 818.003(5), F.A.C.

EXAMPLE

Award Amount and Match

- **FCT grant award amount:** That portion of the total project costs requested from FCT (provide both the dollar amount and the percentage of total project costs). To calculate the percentage, divide the award amount requested from FCT by the total project costs. Carry out and round down to two decimal places. **Match amount:** That portion of the total project costs contributed by the applicant (provide both the dollar amount and the percentage of total project costs). Applicants must match at least 25% unless they are a small county (population 75,000 or fewer), a small municipality (population 10,000 or fewer), or a qualified Nonprofit Environmental Organization, pursuant to Rule 62-818.003(8), F.A.C. **Total Project Costs:** Add the FCT award amount to the match amount. This total must equal 100%. **Note:** Try to work out the total project costs in a way that eliminates fractional percentages.

Estimated Project Costs

Identify the eligible costs associated with acquiring the Project Site. While these costs may be estimates in some instances, they are the basis for the requested grant award amount and should be as realistic as possible. Consult with FCT staff or other knowledgeable persons for help with estimating these costs.

a. **Land purchase price:** This is the actual or estimated purchase price for the site. FCT does not encourage an appraisal of non-pre-acquired property at the time the application is submitted. Possible sources for this price include the local property appraiser's office, the applicant's acquisition staff, local appraisers or other real estate professionals. The final negotiated purchase price on non-pre-acquired will be based on market value appraisals.

b. **Acquisition costs:**

1. Cost of certified surveys: Sources of information for non-pre-acquired property include local surveyors, engineers, or applicant staff.
2. Cost of appraisal and review: Sources of information for non-pre-acquired property include the Property Appraiser's Office, local appraisers or FCT staff. FCT requires an appraisal review if the parcel has a value greater than \$500,000. In addition, two appraisals are required if a parcel has a value equal to or greater than \$1,000,000.
3. Cost of title report(s), title insurance commitment(s) and policy(ies): Sources of information for non-pre-acquired property include local title companies, a Local Government's real estate department or real estate professionals/attorneys. This estimate should be the promulgated title insurance rate based on the estimated purchase price of all parcels.
4. Cost of environmental audit(s): Sources of information for non-pre-acquired property include environmental site assessment companies and engineers.
5. Acquisition agent fees or commissions: Reasonable acquisition fees and commissions, not to exceed \$10,000, paid by the applicant are eligible project costs. Obtain estimates or information for non-pre-acquired property for these expected costs from FCT staff.

c. **Total Project Costs:** Add the land purchase price and acquisition costs to obtain the total project costs.

EXAMPLE

Source(s) of Match

Eligible sources of match may include funds from Local Governments, Nonprofit Environmental Organizations, state or federal grants, private cash donations, or value of real property donated by the landowner provided said property has been acquired in a documented bargain sale or by a donation agreement.

Any real property used as match must be included as part of the Project Site and will be subject to the same conditions as the entire Project Site at the time the FCT grant is awarded. Provide a copy of the donation agreement letter on Exhibit P.

Applicants may not use funds from the Florida Forever Trust Fund for any part of the Match.

Indicate whether the applicant has applied, or plans to apply, to other federal, state, regional, county, or municipal land acquisition programs to buy land within the Project Site. Identify the date of application, the name of the land acquisition program, and whether the Project Site has been selected for funding, if applicable. Outline the actual or estimated project funds provided by the applicant, funds provided by other sources and the appraised value, if known. If applicable, provide a letter from the agency clearly committing to the funds in a supplemental exhibit.

Ownership and Acquisition Plan

An Acquisition Plan is required for project sites with multiple parcels or owners. The Plan should identify the priority parcel(s) and the general acquisition order of the parcels to ensure that, in the event that all parcels cannot be acquired, the purposes of the project can be achieved.

List all property owners and parcel tax identification numbers for all parcels within the Project Site. If the project has been Pre-acquired, provide the closing date and a copy of the signed closing statement on Exhibit P. List the specific order in which the parcels in the project will be acquired. Acquisition of the Project Site will begin with the priority one parcel(s). Parcels may be grouped by priority and more than one parcel may be categorized as priority 1, 2, 3, etc.

Note: The use of condemnation or the threat of condemnation is not considered a Voluntarily-Negotiated Transaction. Parcels acquired under these conditions do not qualify for Acquisition or Reimbursement under the FCT program.

Project Summary

The project summary provides an overview of the Project Site's purpose. The summary should provide a discussion of the purposes of the project, existing and future uses, existing and proposed physical improvements, natural and historic resources, and resource protection and enhancement activities. The summary should include the size of any existing or proposed buildings and indicate if any easements, concessions, or leases exist or are proposed. **In addition, include a concise narrative of how the project will provide accessibility, availability, or adaptability of conservation or recreation lands for individuals with unique abilities, as required by the 2016 amendments to the statutes that govern FCT.**

Project Excellence

The project excellence section provides the Applicant with an opportunity to further describe the project excellence based on matters not adequately addressed by the evaluation criteria, such as whether the proposed project exhibits strong community-based support, possesses exemplary characteristics, highlights regional coordination in the protection of natural resources, assists an otherwise disadvantaged community, or voluntarily help resolve land use conflicts.

In addition, please provide specific, detailed documentation on how your Project Site will provide accessibility, availability or adaptability of conservation or recreation lands for individuals with unique abilities which will incorporate adaptations or modifications to the design and development of recreational resources or equipment to meet the needs of all potential participants including those with physical or development disabilities, pursuant to the 2016 amendments to Section 380.507 of the Florida Statutes.

Submitting an Application

Applicants must submit four sets of application materials (**one original and three copies**) in 2 inch, 3 ring binders. Set up each binder in the same order as presented in the application (e.g., project information, acquisition plan, project summary, project evaluation criteria and exhibits).

To be timely submitted, the completed application and all supporting documents must be received by FCT on or before the published Application deadline, **Tuesday, August 30, 2016, 5:00 PM (EDT)**. Applications received by the Application deadline shall be reviewed and evaluated by FCT based on the materials submitted. Applicants will be notified of the timely receipt and status of their Application(s). No additional information shall be accepted after the Application deadline, unless specifically requested by FCT for clarification of information provided in the Application received by the published Application deadline.

Applications received after the published Application deadline shall be deemed late, and will not be considered by the Trust.

The application must be transmitted (see sample transmittal letter on the [Application Preparation Resources webpage](#)) with an original signature cover letter on Local Government or Nonprofit Environmental Organization letterhead that binds the applicant to fulfill commitments made in the application and identifies a key contact person. All partners to the application are required to provide an original signature letter including the binding statement. An Application Completeness Checklist and a Project Self-Score Check Sheet are available on the [Application Preparation Resources webpage](#) to assist applicants in reviewing the completed application prior to submitting it.

Required Exhibits

Each of the following exhibits is required to be submitted with the grant Application. Provide a label and tab for each exhibit and please ensure that all exhibits are legible and of an appropriate scale. If two or more exhibits are consolidated, make sure this is reflected on the exhibit label. If a specific exhibit is not applicable, include an exhibit page with a statement that it is “Not Applicable.”

Place the exhibits behind the project evaluation criteria section of the Application.

Exhibits

A. Local Comprehensive Plan Objectives and Policies

Include only those comprehensive plan directives cited in the application and **not** the entire comprehensive plan. Please underline or highlight the directives referenced.

B. Proposed Local Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Include only the portion(s) of the proposed comprehensive plan amendment that are cited in the application and **not** the entire comprehensive plan amendment.

C. United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7½-minute Quadrangle Map

Clearly delineate the Project Site boundary. For information on USGS maps, visit the map locator at [The USGS Store](#).

D. County Property Appraiser’s Tax Map

Clearly delineate the Project Site boundary, access points, and names of property owners, parcel tax identification numbers, road names and ownership boundaries using an appropriate scale

E. Aerial Photograph

Provide an aerial photograph at 1 inch = 2,000 feet or details, with the Project Site boundary clearly delineated, and provide a scale in either miles or feet.

F. Natural Communities Map

Provide a map that depicts Natural Communities found on the Project Site, utilizing the classification system identified in the Florida Natural Areas Inventory publication “Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida” or other appropriate classification system. Clearly delineate the Project Site boundary and include the approximate acreage of each Natural Community on the Project Site. Clearly identify all disturbed/partially disturbed areas and areas infested with invasive exotics, as applicable, on the Project Site.

G. Physical Improvements Map

Provide a map that identifies any existing physical improvements, alterations or disturbances occurring on the Project Site, such as cleared areas, buildings, roads, fences, docks, power lines, billboards, borrow pits, etc. Clearly delineate the Project Site boundary and include the approximate acreage of improvements or disturbed areas. Identify any existing or proposed utility, road, or other easements or rights-of-way on the Project Site.

H. Future Land Use Map

Provide a map covering the Project Site and surrounding area that indicates future land use designations and clearly delineates the Project Site boundaries. Indicate the designated Urban Service Area, if applicable. If the Future Land Use Map is color, please provide a color copy with the application.

I. Conservation, Open Space & Outdoor Recreation Map

Provide a map that clearly delineates the Project Site and identifies lands within a three-mile radius of the Project Site that are used for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation, including parks, preserves, wildlife management areas, greenways, Recreational Trail Systems, etc.

J. 100-Year Flood Plan & Coastal High Hazard Area Map

Provide a map depicting the 100-year flood plain, the coastal high-hazard area or a wellfield protection zone with the Project Site boundary clearly delineated.

K. Conceptual Site Plan

Provide a conceptual site plan for the Project that clearly delineates the Project Site boundary and shows the approximate location of all proposed facilities and improvements on the Project Site.

L. Photographs

Provide one set of labeled photographs of the Project Site, to be included in the original Application that documents on-site features including existing structures, disturbed areas, Natural Communities, and historical or archaeological features. Include a legend that identifies the site location and subject matter of each photograph. Provide sufficient photographs to support all application responses. Consider providing at least 12 photographs for small projects and 24 photographs for medium and large projects. Please provide photographs of **all** existing structures or facilities, sidewalks, trail connections, disturbed areas, upland/wetland planting areas, etc.

M. Non-profit Environmental Organization Status

If the Applicant is a Non-profit Environmental Organization, provide evidence of status of the organization, including documentation from the Internal Revenue Service that the organization is recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization, a copy of the Bylaws, and a copy of the Articles of Incorporation. The required documentation is available online from the [Department of State, Division of Corporations](#).

N. Nonprofit Environmental Organization Management Commitment

If the Applicant is a Non-profit Environmental Organization which anticipates being designated as the management entity, the Non-profit Environmental Organization shall provide documentation that they have funds on hand, or letters of commitment to provide the funds prior to closing on the Project Site. The amount equal to ten percent of the Project Cost to be set aside as a management endowment fund for the Project Site.

EXAMPLE

The Non-profit Environmental Organization shall provide a guaranty or pledge by a Local Government, the Water Management District, the Florida Division of Forestry, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, or the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to act as a backup manager to take over the responsibility for management of the Project Site in the event the Non-profit Environmental Organization is unable to.

O. Willing Owner Letter(s)

Letter from the owner(s) of each parcel(s), as identified in the Application, indicating their willingness to consider an offer. If a portion of the property is proposed for acquisition under a conservation easement, provide a letter from the owner stating their willingness to consider an offer for a sale of a conservation easement.

See sample letters at: [Application Preparation Resources webpage](#). If the Project Site is being acquired via less-than-fee or through a donation, the willing owner letter should state so clearly and should include a percentage and amount.

P. Pre-Acquired Projects: Closing Statement

If a Project Site is Pre-acquired, the Applicant shall provide copies of a signed closing statement for each Pre-acquired parcel. If a closing statement is not available at the time of the application submittal, then a copy of the contract for each of the Pre-acquired parcels shall be provided and a copy of the closing statements shall be provided within 14 days after the application deadline. Also, provide a statement that condemnation or threat of condemnation was not used to acquire the parcel(s).

If additional exhibits are included as documentation to the answers in the application, including letter, additional maps, etc., insert them after Exhibit P and alphabetize them starting with Exhibit Q up through Exhibit Z.

EXAMPLE

Application Submission Cycle Information

Upon completion, mail or deliver the four complete sets of application materials to the following by the application deadline, **Tuesday, August 30, 2016, 5:00 PM (EDT)**, to the address below:

For more information on the application process and submission requirements, visit the Florida Communities Trust [Application Process webpage](#). For details on completing the FCT application itself, visit the Florida Communities Trust [Application Preparation Resources webpage](#). If you have any questions, please visit the Florida Communities Trust or contact FCT staff at (850) 245-2501 or submit an email to FloridaCommunitiesTrust@dep.state.fl.us.

**Florida Communities Trust
Office of Operations
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 115
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000
Phone number 850-245-2501 or visit our website @
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/FL_Communities_Trust/default_cont.htm**