



Land Trust Alliance
Together, conserving the places you love



Midwest Land and Stewardship Peer Learning Program 2018-2019

Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts and the Land Trust Alliance's Midwest program are teaming up to offer a peer learning opportunity for land protection and stewardship staff members in the Midwest. We encourage land trust professionals to join up to connect, learn, share, support and mentor one another.

It helps to know that I am not alone in some of the issues I am struggling with. I feel like I can pick up the phone and call any of the participants for some input – that's a nice feeling!

~ Danielle Devlin, past peer participant, Six Rivers Land Conservancy

The Peer Learning Program casts a wide net within the land trust community. The program is designed to create and maintain a cohesive, connected land trust professional corps that will in turn strengthen our conservation community across the Midwest. The goal is to provide learning and mentoring in the short term and cultivate a culture of peer collaboration that continues over the long term.

Through the peer program, you will meet new colleagues and deepen your relationships with people you already know. The program requires active participation and is led by the peers. We have a firm belief that no matter where a person is in their career, ***everyone has something to learn and something to teach***. Besides, we have a lot of fun!

All land protection and stewardship staff members are encouraged to apply, including those who have participated in past peer programs.

Your obligation is that of active participation. You should not act as knowledge-absorbing sponges, but as whetstones on which we can all sharpen our wits.

~ Edsger W. Dijkstra, systems scientist and computer science pioneer

Program background

This iteration of the Land and Stewardship Peer Program will run from March 2018 through November 2019. You are required to complete an application to join the program, including an outline of subjects you are interested in learning about and teaching others about.

This is a self-directed program where all activities are encouraged, but optional. The success of the program depends on active engagement. Alliance and Gathering Waters staff will provide the framework and space to gather, and the peers will direct the learning opportunities, subjects to be discussed, frequency of meetings, and sharing of learning materials.

This peer group intentionally includes both land protection and stewardship professionals. As land protection and land stewardship are inextricably linked, past peer groups have found great benefit in sharing between these groups.

Since all peers rely on each other to participate fully, please be prepared to commit to these core values:

- A desire to learn;
- A willingness to share your expertise with colleagues;
- A promise to provide input for creating the program content;
- A pledge to actively participate in learning circle conference calls, the peer gathering, online group discussions, and in-person visits; and
- Openness to new ideas and willingness to challenge the status quo.

Program details

Being a part of a peer learning group is an exciting opportunity to expand your knowledge through practical advice and teaching. It is also a great support group—for sharing successes over a virtual coffee, or commiserating when things are not going as planned.

To be a part of the program you need a spirit of adventure and commitment to active participation. The activities can and will be adjusted based on the wishes of the group and our programmatic capacity. We expect the following elements to be the basic structure of the program:

1. Peer Learning Circle Calls

- a. We will arrange regular conference or videoconference calls with the group.
- b. The group will determine the frequency and duration of the calls. Past peer groups have had monthly calls or quarterly calls.
- c. The subject of the calls will be determined by the peer group and will be split evenly between topics on stewardship and acquisition.
- d. We will bring in subject matter experts when appropriate and available to expand the learning opportunities.

2. Peer Gathering

- a. We will plan a multi-day peer gathering that will incorporate sessions of interest determined by, and often taught by, the peer group participants.
- b. The gathering will incorporate learning on how to plan for climate change, focused on practical adaptation strategies, strategic conservation planning, and communications.
- c. The sessions will be a mixture of training, discussion, active learning, and demonstration.
- d. There will be social time for people to get to know one another.
- e. There will be a registration fee to attend the gathering.

3. Online Group

We will help facilitate an online learning group for peers to share ideas, ask questions, gather materials and examples, and touch base on a more regular basis.

4. In-person visits

We encourage peers to find opportunities to plan in-person visits to other land trusts. We expect all participants to welcome their peer visitors, as there is no substitute for seeing, feeling, and experiencing first hand.

5. Experienced Peer Mentors Sub-Group

- a. Have extensive experience and looking to stretch yourself and deepen your knowledge? Consider joining the Experienced Peer Mentoring sub-group.
- b. Experienced Peer Mentors will have both additional obligations and additional learning opportunities.
- c. Learn more, including how to apply, on the next page.

Funding: This program is made possible through the generous donations of individuals and the following foundations: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, and The Carls Foundation.



Questions:

Contact MaryKay O'Donnell at 269-352-7032 or mkodonnell@lta.org
Contact Meg Domroese at (608) 251-9131, ext. 12 or meg@gatheringwaters.org

Applications due March 23, 2018: [Peer Program SurveyMonkey Application](#)

Experienced Peer Mentors Sub-Group

Yearning for a professional development opportunity? Ready to give back to the land trust community? Eager to stretch yourself and learn new things? This may be the place for you!

Several past participants of the land protection and stewardship peer program approached us with the idea of using their experience to help others in a more formal and meaningful way. As folks settle into their careers, they are looking for opportunities to expand their horizons while using their skills to help others.

As small non-profits, land trust often have limited opportunities for professional development and mentoring. We want to create that opportunity with an Experienced Peer Mentors sub-group of the peer mentoring program.

The Experienced Peer Mentors is a new sub-group. How this cohort works will depend on the desire of the selected peers. Here are some ideas to get us started.

What you will give:

- **Group mentoring on specific topics.** For example, if one or more peer group members would like to learn about monitoring with iPads, we may ask one or more Experienced Peer Mentors to hold a training call with those interested, or invite them on a monitoring visit.
- **Leading peer learning circle calls.** As experienced professionals you have learned a lot, but as the old adage goes, “to really know something, teach it.” We will rely on the Experienced Peer Mentors to lead at least one call on a subject of your choosing over the 2-year period.
- **Responding to specific requests** by peer group participants. We will ask you to respond to online requests for information, examples, and templates. This will be the responsibility of the group as a whole, monitored by program staff.
- **Reviewing Standards and Practices examples.** As the Land Trust Alliance is building the new Learning Center, we are updating our examples, policies and templates for specific practices. We would like help in vetting these examples to ensure we have the latest and greatest information to share with the land trust community.

What you will gain:

- **Professional development opportunities.** Program staff will arrange additional training opportunities specifically aimed at your needs (e.g., managing staff, conducting performance evaluations, budgeting and understanding financial reports, managing competing priorities, work planning beyond to do lists). You tell us what you need and we will try to accommodate.
- **Comradery** with others at the same professional level in their careers.
- **Group coaching sessions** with a professional coach, pending funding.
- **Leadership and Personality Evaluations** to help you understand yourself and colleagues better. Examples might be Strengths-Based Leadership, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, or the Keirseley Temperament Sorter.
- **Reinvigoration and satisfaction** from giving back to a community that has given to you!

Who should apply:

- Experienced land protection and stewardship staff members
- Staff members in leadership positions in their organizations.
- People who have a service mindset.
- Individuals who would like to stretch themselves through a formalized program.
- Staff desiring professional development opportunities.
- People with a willingness to teach.

While this is a separate add-on experience to the Land and Stewardship Peer Learning Program, you will start by indicating your interest in being an Experienced Peer Mentor on the general application. We will contact you for further details once the initial group has been formed.

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