

Conservation Futures Tax Levy (CFT)

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

1. Conservation Futures policies
2. Funding availability & timeline
3. Application evaluation criteria
4. Application review

Reminder: This handout is available online with our workshop information.

PART 1. CONSERVATION FUTURES POLICIES

Conservation Futures Funding

- Conservation Futures Tax Levy (“CFT” acronym) – property tax collection.
- State authorized CFT property tax to conserve open spaces in 1971, King County implemented in 1982
- CFT grants have protected >100,000 acres in cities & rural King County

King County Land Conservation Initiative www.kingcounty.gov/land-conservation

Conservation Futures funding is part of a county-wide Land Conservation Initiative (“LCI”) to preserve the remaining high conservation value lands and secure our regional trail corridors within 30 years, while ensuring equitable access for all.

Conservation Futures Advisory Committee

- Official committee to advise King County government
- 16 members appointed by King County Executive, confirmed by Council
- Review applications for CFT funding
- Recommend funding awards to Executive and Council

What Types of Lands can CFT Funding Protect?

- Types include natural lands, forest, rivers, trails, farmland, urban greenspaces

What Uses Are Allowed?

Low-impact, passive recreational uses, e.g.:

- walking and hiking
- gardening and farming
- free play (e.g., kicking a ball around)
- picnicking
- biking on dispersed trails
- horseback riding
- fishing
- small playgrounds

What Uses Are Not Allowed?

Uses requiring intensive development, dedicated infrastructure, athletic programming, etc. - e.g.:

- mountain biking park
- ballfields
- community center
- golf course, disc golf course
- off-leash dog parks

Sites should be mostly open space/15% limit

Site should be mostly open space.

≤15% of the site “non-vegetative impervious surfaces” (graveled or paved, without vegetation).

Trails don’t count towards the 15% (paved or soft-surface).

Within the 15%, development can support appropriate site uses, such as:

- parking, trailheads/kiosks
- restrooms
- picnic shelters
- small playgrounds (<5,000 s.f.)
- community garden toolshed
- *Consider bioswales or raingardens to infiltrate runoff from paved surfaces*

Additional CFT Opportunities

Co-investment in green stormwater sites, particularly with public access opportunities.

Opportunity to partner open space or community gardens with affordable housing.

What Can CFT Funding Buy?

Fee Title: Buying a whole parcel of land.

Easement: Buying only certain rights to the land (the fee title remains with a private landowner)

(e.g. conservation easement protects forest & stream on private land)

Entire parcels or portions of parcels.

What If Only Part of a Site is Eligible?

CFT funds can help buy the eligible part of the site, with uses allowed under CFT policies.

Applicant can use other funds to buy the part of site that doesn’t meet CFT policies.

This isn’t part of the “CFT” project area, and funds spent here don’t count as match to CFT.

What Can CFT Pay For?

- Purchase price for land or easement property interests
- Transaction costs: title, appraisal, closing costs, taxes, environmental assessment, etc.
- Staff, legal, and administrative costs directly associated with acquisition
- Site stabilization

*CFT is for acquisition - not development or maintenance costs

*Appraisal & appraisal review are required

*Condemnation is not allowed

*No prior authorization needed if spending funds prior to application or award

Site Stabilization Costs (SSC)

Includes:

- Structure demolition
- Fencing*
- Signage*

*To secure acquisition assets, e.g., sensitive cultural, historic, environmental resource; public safety hazard; attractive nuisance

Allowable Stabilization Costs

Awarded on a per-parcel basis:

- Parcels with structures: \$250,000 total (CFT and match combined)
- Vacant parcels: \$30,000 (CFT and match combined)

Who Can Receive CFT Funding and Own CFT-Funded Land?

The following parties can receive CFT funding awards, and own CFT-funded land:

- County
- Cities or towns
- Metropolitan park districts
- Certain eligible nonprofits with IRS tax exempt status, which meet state statute definitions of a historic preservation corporation 501c3, or a nature conservancy corporation 501c.
 - *Review nonprofit's mission, articles of incorporation, etc., for eligibility.*
 - *Consider nonprofit's ability to manage/own property...this is a "forever" responsibility*
 - *Nonprofit must identify a successor agency or eligible nonprofit willing to own the land if the applicant ceases to maintain tax exempt status or shuts down.*

There are opportunities for community partnerships with agencies/nature conservancies to help initiate and support projects.

Community Partnership Examples

Match Requirement

3-to-1 match requirement typically applies. Usually "cash match"

e.g.: \$400,000 land cost of property to be purchased
\$300,000 CFT grant
+ 100,000 cash match
= \$400,000 total funding for purchase

- Match must be secured before CFT award is used to purchase land.
- Match does not have to be secured at the time of application. CFT is often the first funding awarded to a project, helping the applicant secure awards from other grant sources.

Match Waiver for "Opportunity Area" projects www.kingcounty.gov/CFTmatchwaiver

"Match waiver": CFT pays 100% of eligible acquisition costs for "opportunity area" projects

e.g. \$400,000 land cost
\$400,000 CFT grant
+ \$0 cash match
= \$400,000 total funding for purchase

Qualifying as an "Opportunity Area"

Method #1 – Three Mapped Criteria

Property is in an area with:

- a. Lowest incomes (lowest 1/3 of census tracts)
- b. Highest hospitalization rates (highest 1/3 of ZIP codes)
- c. Lack of open spaces (defined as no publicly accessible park or open space within ¼ mile in the urban area or 2 miles in the rural area)

Map available through a link at: www.kingcounty.gov/CFTmatchwaiver

Method #2 – Qualitative Method

Property is in an area where applicant demonstrates that the populations that the project is intended to serve, experience:

- a. Disproportionately limited access to open space
- b. Demonstrated hardships (e.g. incomes, health, social, environmental factors) that reflect a lack of “Determinants of Equity”

Projects might qualify that are:

- Near an existing park but add land with meaningful new community benefits
- Areas that don’t quite qualify under Method #1, but still show demonstrated hardships

Opportunity Areas Viewer & Data Report

Visit [Opportunity Areas map viewer](#), research property, create a data report with helpful information. Find [additional data sources](#) to add to your story.

How Do I Request a Match Waiver?

Community Engagement:

- Community engagement around the project (e.g. local residents and community-based organizations; community discussion/open forum; planning process).
- Recent engagement. Integrating community leadership into engagement/planning.

Letters of Support:

- Attach two letters of support, ideally from community-based organizations

Application

- Make the case in application, including Application “Supplemental Form #1”

Presentation

- CFT Committee application review includes presentation with applicant

Committee Determination:

- In an opportunity area?
- Community engagement?
- Recommend match waiver?
- Recommend funding?

Presentations

Projects requiring match have 20 minutes, and projects seeking a match waiver have 30 minutes.

Our committee's focus is to put the right amount of money into the project relative to its needs at the current time. That means that some projects might get full funding, others might get scaled related to where they are in their process.

Applicants will want to be prepared to discuss readiness, urgency, opportunities to phase funding or scale their projects.

Award Timeframe

Committee recommendation report in summer.

King County Council award decisions in late fall.

Agreements:

- Cities: Interlocal Cooperation Agreement (new template 2019) + amendments for each award
- Non-profits: Agreements

Reimbursements: Funding can be paid at completion of project, or along the way once we have an agreement in place, e.g.:

- CFT funds placed in escrow for closing
 - Progressive payment as funds expended (invoices for title, appraisal, environmental, etc.)
- Award reviewed & adopted this year, two years to implement awards until extension is needed

PART 2. FUNDING AVAILABILITY & TIMELINE

Funding Availability: 2025 Awards

Thanks to the voters of King County for their approval of Proposition 1 in November 2022, we anticipate there should be upwards of \$60 million in CFT 2025 funding available for application. We anticipate significantly higher demand for funding than will be available.

Funding Availability and Timeline

Grant Timeline + February 12th, 2024 Due Date

Request technical assistance/support by emailing CFT Program Coordinator

CFT Website www.kingcounty.gov/CFTapplication

Applications:

- CFT Application Guidance
- Two options for applications
 - Projects Applying for Acquisition and Site Stabilization Cost Funding (Word + Excel documents)
 - Projects Applying for Site Stabilization Cost Funding Only (Word + Excel documents)

Additional Reference Material:

- Schedule
- CFT Program Manual
- Application Evaluation Criteria
- Frequently Asked Question (FAQs)
- Match Waiver information

CFT Program Manual captures much of the information covered in the workshop.

Technical Assistance and General Project Support

Technical assistance for grantwriting is available, please request early and no later than January 12.

Request technical assistance by emailing Ingrid.Lundin@kingcounty.gov.

Also feel free to reach out to Ingrid.Lundin@kingcounty.gov or anfisher@kingcounty.gov for general project support as you develop your project.

PART 3. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Projects are highly varied, and are not expected to meet all criteria.

Characteristics vary for urban vs. rural sites.

CRITERIA PART 1. OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

A. Wildlife Habitat or Rare Plant Reserve

- Wildlife habitat value (rural or urban)
- Plant communities
- Connection to larger systems
- Restoration potential

B. Salmon Habitat and Aquatic Resources

- Quality of salmon habitat – on site and in basin
- Headwaters, streams, rivers, marine
- Restoration potential
- Access & education opportunity

C. Scenic resources

- Preserving scenic views & landscapes
- Visual relief in an urban setting
- Viewpoints, view corridors, area that is viewed

D. Community Separator/Green Buffer

- Areas that define regional form, separate neighborhoods or cities, waterways
- Open space or green buffers between neighborhoods
- Scaled benefits: neighborhood vs. regional separator

E. Historic or Cultural Resources

- Land only, not structures
- Designated or eligible historic sites
- Cultural or tribal significance

F. Urban passive use natural area/greenbelt)

- Located in an urban area (city or urban unincorporated)
- Adding to greenspaces, providing access to waterways
- Larger size may provide more benefits

G. Park, open space, or natural corridor addition

- Adds to existing park or open space system
- Meaningful contribution, critical links, inholdings

H. Passive recreation in area with unmet needs

- Adding passive recreation opportunities where needed
- Need may be demonstrated in adopted plan

I. Projects to redress historic disparities in access to open space in opportunity areas

- Project determined to be in an Opportunity Area
- Community engagement & support required (2 letters)

CRITERIA PART 2. ADDITIONAL FACTORS

A. Educational/interpretive opportunity

- Opportunity for meaningful education or interpretation
- Access and site suitability

B. Impact to open space resources

- Threat to open space resources if site is not protected
- Opportunity to create new open spaces

C. Partnerships

- Public & private partnerships encouraged
- Includes volunteer efforts, stewardship, donations

D. Identified in an adopted plan

- Comprehensive, park, natural resource plan
- Identify but don't attach the plan

E. Transferable development rights (TDR)

- Will development rights be transferred?
- Designated sending site or receiving area

Criteria – Feasibility: ownership complexity, willing sellers, community support

- How complex is the deal – many landowners? Readiness & phasing potential?
- Have landowners been contacted, will they sell?
- Neighborhood & community support?

Criteria - Additional Consideration. Stewardship/maintenance

- How will the property be stewarded / maintained?
- Volunteer stewardship opportunities?
- Funding availability?

Criteria - Additional Consideration. Regional Significance (Committee recommends)

- Demonstrable regional visibility, use, ecological, cultural, historical, or other natural resource significance
- Visibility from park or public right-of way
- Number of visitors
- Unique or highly important resource

PART 4. APPLICATION REVIEW

Review the application guidance and application (available at www.kingcounty.gov/CFTapplication)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: www.kingcounty.gov/CFTapplication

Program Coordinator: Ingrid Lundin, Ingrid.Lundin@kingcounty.gov, 206-477-4578

Program Support: Anjali Fisher, Anfisher@kingcounty.gov, 206-263-2905