

King County Conservation Futures Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated 11/2023

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions. For more detail on Conservation Futures policies, please refer to the [Conservation Futures program manual](#).

Eligibility and Allowed Uses

What is Conservation Futures (CFT)?

Conservation Futures tax levy is a local property tax used to conserve open space lands within King County. The acronym “CFT” (referring to Conservation Futures Tax levy) is often used to refer to the grant program. Grants can help buy open space in cities and in rural King County.

In the 1970s, the Washington State Legislature passed a series of environmental protection laws. These laws included the Conservation Futures Tax. The Legislature said that it was a 'fundamental and inalienable right' of residents to have a healthy and pleasant environment. In 1982, King County became the first county to use CFT funds on the recommendation of the Farmlands Preservation Task Force. Read more about the history of the CFT program in King County at historylink.org.

Who can apply?

- Governmental agencies
 - Cities
 - County
 - Park districts
- Eligible nonprofits
 - 501c3 historic preservation associations
 - 501c nature conservancy associations (organizations with a primary purpose to conserve natural resources or open spaces)
- Community groups and individuals can partner on projects with local agencies and eligible nonprofits. Partnerships have included:
 - [Delridge Wetland and Stewardship Project](#)
 - [Save Waldo Woods](#)
 - [One Bothell](#)

CFT funding can help acquire land for various types of open spaces and parks. What types of open spaces can be created on land purchased with CFT funding?

- Urban greenspaces
- Passive recreation parks
- Natural areas
- Habitat and stream restoration opportunities
- Trails
- Community gardens
- Farms (urban and rural)
- Forests
- Stormwater parks ([learn more about stormwater parks at the Puget Sound Regional Council website](#))
- Parks or open space [near affordable housing](#)

Does the land I'm purchasing have to be vacant open space already?

While much of what we fund are undeveloped properties or easements on developed sites, we can also fund acquisition of properties that are developed. Site stabilization funding can help pay demolition costs.

What types of public access can a CFT-funded site be used for?

CFT-funded sites may be used for passive, low-impact recreation. Examples:

- Hiking
- Walking
- Gardening
- Open play (i.e., kicking a ball around, tossing a frisbee)
- Biking or horse-riding on dispersed trails
- Picnicking

What types of public uses are not allowed on a CFT-funded site?

CFT funding cannot be used for projects that require development of facilities for organized/structured athletic activities. Examples:

- Ballfields
- Golf courses
- Disc golf courses
- Mountain biking parks (with high density of trails & constructed course features)
- Campgrounds
- Fenced off-leash dog parks

What is the 15% limit on non-vegetative impervious surfaces?

At most, 15% of the site can be developed with non-vegetative, impervious surfaces. Trails are not included in this calculation, whether soft-surface or paved. Within the 15%, you can build infrastructure that supports the intended passive recreational uses of the site. Examples:

- Parking lots
- Restrooms
- Picnic shelters
- Kiosks, signage, trailhead amenities
- Small playgrounds up to 5,000 square feet
- Toolshed on a community garden

What costs can be covered by this grant and are there any limits?

CFT funding can be used for the following costs:

- Acquisition costs
 - The price of the land & property interests (valued by a reviewed appraisal)
 - Related costs such as title, appraisal, environmental assessments
 - Staff, legal, and administrative costs related to the property acquisition
- Site stabilization costs
 - Fencing, signage, and structure demolition implemented shortly after acquisition

CFT does not fund development or maintenance costs. This grant cannot be used for condemnation or eminent domain.

In communities that have been under-served with open space investments, CFT may be able to pay for 100% of acquisition costs. See the [Match waiver page](#) for more details.

There are no upper or lower limits on acquisition cost requests.

Site stabilization costs can be awarded on a per-parcel basis, not per-project basis (meaning that projects with multiple parcels can request funding for each parcel). Vacant parcels are capped at a maximum of \$30,000 (including CFT + match) and parcels with structures are capped at a maximum of \$250,000 (including CFT + match).

What other funding sources are available for creating parks and open spaces?

There is other funding available for capacity building, planning and advocacy, and programming for parks and open spaces. Please [click here](#) for a handout about other funding sources.

Application Information

Where do I find current information on the application process?

Go to the [Application process](#) page for current materials and due dates.

Please review [CFT Application Guidance](#) and [Application evaluation criteria and general conditions](#).

How much funding is available this year?

\$40-60 million in Conservation Futures funding is expected to be available through the grant round.

Match Requirements and the Match Waiver

How much match is needed?

Starting with the 2024 awards, CFT awards require a 25% match. This means that CFT can pay 75% of project costs and match pays 25% of project costs. (Awards made prior to 2024 require a dollar-for-dollar match.) For example:

Total cost for my organization's urban farm acquisition project: \$400,000
CFT funding: \$300,000
Match required: \$100,000

In communities that have been under-served with open space investments, CFT may be able to cover 100% of acquisitions costs. See the [Match waiver page](#) for more details.

What are my options for meeting the match requirement?

Match may include any of the following:

- Cash
- Land match
 - Cash value of other open space land acquired within the past two years
 - Land match valued by an appraisal

Application Review

What does the application review process look like?

February	Applications due
Mid-March through April	Project review sessions with Committee (held online)
Spring	Committee develops funding recommendations.
Late Summer	Committee recommendation report sent to King County Executive and Council, shared with applicants at that time.

Late November Funding awards approved by King County Council in late fall, typically in late November.

Project Delivery

What is the timeframe for completing awarded projects?

CFT funding should be spent within two years of when the award is made.

Example:

Early 2024	You apply for Conservation Futures 2025 funding award
November 2024	Your CFT award is funded in the 2025 county budget
2025-2026	We establish a funding agreement with you; you work to purchase the land and spend out your award
December 2026	CFT funding should be entirely spent. If not, you will be asked to report back to the Committee and request an extension in early 2027.
2027	Request extension, if needed, at Project Progress meeting

What if my scope, budget, or timeline changes?

Please discuss changes with Ingrid Lundin, Conservation Futures Coordinator, by email ([Ingrid Lundin](#)) or at 206-477-4578.