



## Wild East Action Fund 2020 Program Criteria

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), on behalf of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership (ATLP), is accepting proposals for land protection and organizational capacity building grants intended to support conservation work within the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) landscape, also known as the Wild East. The Wild East Action Fund provides funding to qualified organizations working to advance conservation of the unique values of the A.T. and its surrounding lands.

The Wild East Action Fund is administered by the ATC. Financial support is provided by The Volgenau Foundation.

### I. About the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

The mission of the ATLP is to connect the wild, scenic and cultural wonders of the Appalachian Trail and its surrounding landscape. Co-convened by the ATC and the National Park Service, the ATLP is a coalition of federal, state and local government agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, and academic institutions. All entities working on land conservation adjacent to the A.T. are invited to participate in ATLP efforts.

### II. About the Wild East Action Fund

The Wild East Action Fund supports the following goals:

- Accelerating the pace and scale of A.T. landscape conservation;
- Enhancing capacity for strategic and targeted conservation activities throughout the A.T. landscape;
- Strengthening collaboration among partners across the A.T. landscape;
- Building community support and engagement in sustaining the A.T. landscape, which elevates its importance and the urgency regarding its protection; and
- Championing an A.T. landscape that encourages all people to feel welcome, respected, supported and valued.

The Wild East Action Fund offers two potential funding opportunities: capital grants for land protection projects and grants for organizational capacity building.

#### 1. Land protection projects

Capital grants for land protection will be awarded to projects that:

- Contribute to the permanent protection and stewardship of the exceptional values of the A.T. landscape, including (but not limited to) the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, recreational and community values;
- Permanently conserve resilient areas that serve as “[strongholds for nature in a changing climate](#),” and
- Attract additional revenue sources to leverage Wild East Action Fund dollars.

Funding may be used to acquire permanent conservation easements and/or fee land interests. Funding may also be used to cover transactional costs, including cost of appraisals, surveys, titles, environmental assessments and legal costs. Grant funds may not be used for organizational overhead and/or administration.

Preference will be given to projects that have been identified as a high priority in a local and/or regional conservation plan and/or (as indicated above) to projects located within climate-resilient lands. See The Nature Conservancy’s [Resilient Land Mapping Tool](#).

## 2. Organizational capacity building

Grants for capacity building will be awarded to projects that:

- Build capacity to implement new or existing strategic conservation plans;
- Develop local or regional strategic conservation plans within the A.T. landscape;
- Build capacity to sustain and steward the resources that define the A.T. landscape;
- Build capacity to support justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) initiatives; and
- Increase public awareness of the resources that define the A.T. landscape.

Preference will be given to projects that incorporate measurable outcomes that assess the organization’s success in achieving its objectives and deliverables. Additionally, preference will be given to projects that also develop systems or practices that build organizational capacity and effectiveness and are likely to be sustained beyond the grant period.

## III. Project Evaluation

Projects for either funding opportunity should be concrete, defined and should have clear objectives, outcomes and deliverables. Competitive projects demonstrate broad community benefit, have a high likelihood of success and can be accomplished within the slated grant period. Projects with matching funding that is firmly secured will rank higher than projects with undetermined or unlikely funding.

**Land protection projects** will specifically be evaluated for:

- The protection of important climate-resilient lands;
- The threat and/or conservation opportunity presented;

- The extent of significant natural habitat, scenic attribute, public access to outdoor recreation opportunities, cultural and/or historic sites, and connections to existing conserved lands and/or community lands important to the A.T. landscape;
- The likelihood of the project increasing the pace of land conservation in the organization's service area;
- The ability of the project to catalyze other projects and partnerships between public and private sector entities;
- Evidence of a sound stewardship plan and funding; and
- The project's ability to ensure the A.T. landscape is accessible, welcoming and inclusive to all.

**Organizational capacity building projects** will be evaluated for:

- Sufficient organizational capacity and a commitment to complete the proposed activities;
- Sound training and professional development opportunities for new and/or expanded staff (including opportunities that support justice, equity, diversity and inclusion across the A.T. landscape); and
- The ability to match and leverage other funding sources.

Projects should enable partnership, collaboration or community initiatives involving other conservation partners within the A.T. landscape in order to catalyze local or regional open space protection. Projects should also build community support for and involvement in land conservation; advance an innovative model for collaboration, outreach, constituency-building, and/or community engagement; and advance climate-smart initiatives, including efforts to integrate resilience (such as The Nature Conservancy [resiliency data](#)) and climate change science into conservation planning.

## IV. Organization Eligibility

To be eligible for the Wild East Action Fund, organizations should be aligned with the ATLP's mission of connecting the wild, scenic and cultural wonders of the A.T. and its surrounding landscape. Organizations should broadly serve the needs of a geographic area within the A.T. landscape. Qualified conservation organizations, including 501(C)3 nonprofits and public agencies, are eligible for both funding opportunities within the Wild East Action Fund.

## V. Award Information

**The ATC expects to grant up to \$500,000 to qualified land protection projects in 2020.**

There is no minimum limit on land protection project grant size. Projects will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

**For organizational capacity building projects, up to \$150,000 is available in 2020.** Single-year grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 will be awarded.

Both funding opportunities require a cash or in-kind match. Matches will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may depend on the circumstances of the organization. Matches should be secure, well explained and verifiable.

A small committee representing the ATLP will review proposals and determine awards.

## VI. Application Process

To apply, please complete the 2020 Wild East Action Fund application template and also provide the following:

- Project narrative not to exceed two pages that provides a project overview, goals and outcomes, and partner organizations and/or agencies involved in your project;
- Project budget that details allowable expenses, total project costs, sources of match and requested grant amount;
- Location and project maps;
- A letter of nonprofit status from the IRS, if appropriate; and
- Letters of support (optional).

If you have questions, please contact Anne Sentz at [asentz@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:asentz@appalachiantrail.org).

***\*\*The application period opens Monday, July 20, 2020. Applications should be received no later than Friday, September 11, 2020.\*\****