



Oconee County Conservation Bank

Title: Grant Procedures
Policy No. 0003

Effective Date: August 8, 2023

Revision Date(s):

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Attachments:

Evaluation Scoresheet

Section 404 Findings Template

Purpose:

This policy provides guidelines for applicants and outlines the evaluation procedures customarily used by the Oconee County Conservation Bank Board (“OCCB” or the “Board”) to process, award, and monitor grants.

Definitions:

The definitions set forth in Chapter 2, Article IV, Division 9, Section 2-399 of the Oconee County Code of Ordinances are incorporated by this reference.

1. “Applicant” means an eligible OCCB recipient applying for a grant related to a specific property.
2. “Conservation Value” means the amount the fair market value of the property will be reduced by the placement of a conservation easement on the property.
3. “Grant Agreement” means a binding contract between the applicant and Oconee County that meets the requirements of OCCB Ordinance Section 2-404(c)(2).
4. “Inholding Land” means privately owned property that is 100% surrounded by protected land.
5. “Property/Project Name” means the common or colloquial name used to identify a specific piece of land or project that is the subject of an application. Each property/project name must be unique.

Policy:

Part One: Application Procedures

1. The Board will accept applications on or before April 1st, August 1st, and November 1st of each calendar year. The application form is available on the Oconee County website.
2. All applications should be submitted pursuant to Board Policy No. 0001 Applicant Privacy. All applications should be submitted in electronic pdf or similar format.
3. During the review process, the Board may request additional information from the applicant. Failure to provide the requested information in a timely manner may result in a delay in processing the application until the next cycle.
4. The Board members will record their final collective evaluation as a score as set forth on the evaluation scoresheet, which will be attached to the official minutes.
5. The applicable minimum scores that the Board typically uses as standards for recommending a grant award are as follows:
 - a. The minimum score for farmland is 30.
 - b. The minimum score for inholding Land is 22.
 - c. The minimum score for non-farmland is 40.
 - d. The minimum score for solely historic or cultural land is 21.
6. The Board strives to limit its grant recommendations to ten percent (10%) of the conservation value of the project. In extraordinary circumstances and for good cause, however, the Board may recommend a grant that is more than 10% of the conservation value of the project.
7. The Board's recommendation to Council shall include the findings required by OCCB Ordinance 2-404(b)(4) utilizing the Section 2-404 Findings Form. The Board may delegate the responsibility to prepare the Section 2-404 findings to a single Board member.

Part Two: Post Award Procedures

1. The Board will notify the applicant of Council's decision.

2. If awarded a grant, the applicant has a period of four (4) months from the date of the Council's decision to notify the Board of its decision to accept the grant.
3. The transaction must close within one year of recipient's notice of acceptance of award, unless extended. The applicant may request in writing a one-time extension of six months. The Board will notify the applicant of its decision on the extension request.
4. If the interest in the Property is reduced by 10% or less in acreage of that stated in the application prior to closing, the Board shall have the authority to reduce the award on a proportional per acre basis. However, a reduction of acreage exceeding 10% may be deemed material and may render the original grant award void.
5. The following closing documents should be submitted to the Board for review at least ten (10) days prior to the scheduled closing:
 - a. An independent certified appraisal of the property dated within twelve (12) months of the grant approval by Council;
 - b. A certified environmental hazard assessment, unless exempt under the OCCB ordinance;
 - c. A final draft of the conservation easement and deed;
 - d. A final draft of the settlement statement;
 - e. A final draft of the title insurance commitment and exceptions;
 - f. A final draft of the grant agreement;
 - g. Any subordination agreement or other document that will be recorded at or after closing;
 - h. Any other data, acknowledgement, or documentation requested by the OCCB; and
 - i. The name, address, email address, and phone number of the closing attorney and firm.
6. The Board reserves the right to reject documents that do not comply with the OCCB Ordinance. Failure to submit the above documents may delay funding by the Board.
7. Within sixty (60) days of closing, recipient should provide the Board with executed closing documents, a report of how the grant funds were distributed, and the status of the project.

8. The recipient and the Board shall retain copies of all documents related to the award of the grant and the acquisition of interests in land.
9. All interests in land obtained with OCCB funds may only be assigned from one OCCB recipient to another eligible OCCB recipient after approval by the majority of the Board.
10. The OCCB recipient must notify the Board if a claim is made against the title to the property.