

## **Additional Comments Sheet:**

### **Q6**

#### **If so, what problems did you have?**

Disappearing screen with need to reconnect

Just getting my mic audio working - figured it out after a while.

Streaming issues - there were some issues with hearing people properly and delays.

Computer technology is a weakness of mine anyway, but is a bit more difficult as I recover from Chemo FOG; especially if I am pressed for time. I did get on though & was able to participate; listening to the information from others as well as express my thoughts/ideas too!

Overall, it was a good format.

### **Q10**

#### **If not, what could have been explained better?**

I might have been a few min late. I did not have a copy of the agenda.

Background info. Process

### **Q16**

#### **If not, what could have been improved?**

Knowing that the testimony of the participants would be honestly considered and positive action would be taken to remove the political stigma now attached to the Trust. People of Nebraska need to be able to trust the Trust.

I feel like the breakout sessions would have been a lot more useful and would have garnered a higher quality feedback if it was broken out into areas of interest. I felt like the various participants were all focused on their specific areas and objectives and therefore were able to get down to the nitty gritty of feedback.

The break out group I was in was a bit disappointing in that just a couple people kept the dialogue moving along. Some participants did not contribute to the discussion at all. Board members of NET did not offer insight or elaborate on issues brought up. I would have liked a more dynamic group! I realize that is not due to the organizers, but more a reflection of who was in the group. Over all I was appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the round table. Thank you.

NE ENV Trust Board members should have been available to answer questions. Gov too.

More time, a clear goal of recognition that the new contexts of climate change, the health pandemic, resulting economic stress, and the social unrest require new thinking for the future operations of the NETF. Also, there was not enough focus or transparency on the commercial behavior of certain Board members in the award of 2020 grants, and how this debacle can be avoided in the future.

These are unique and unusual times for the investment in environmental issues. The new contexts deserve unusual and unique public deliberations and public actions, in order to preserve the NETF and Nebraska's fragile environments and communities.

Because of the obviously contentious nature for the reason the meeting was being called, it seemed that participation by voting board members did not contribute to open discussion. Rather than coming across as "engaged", their presence in meetings came across as "snooping" or suppressive. It is hard to have discussions openly about where NET's actions are meeting expectations, and where they are falling short, when those that are the perceived problem are sitting in on the discussions. I gathered this same sentiment from other members of my participation group. NET is invaluable to Nebraska's conservation efforts and has been a great partner and asset to this state, and having those who implement the projects NET funds be able to speak freely about how board dealings impact their work is a critical cog in the wheel of making NET successful. This function was not allowed to happen as it should have been in these discussions.

## **Q18**

### **Is there anything you would like to see done differently at the next Category Roundtable Meeting in five years?**

At this moment, no. Thanks for the opportunity to participate and to hear the perspectives and ideas of others interested in the Trust's mission.

Although it was not in person this year, I think the format gave opportunities to discuss openly and without constraint.

Provide this survey closer to the meetings.

In the breakout session, there are some tangents that took up a lot of time, but had very little pertinence to NET or Nebraska's natural resources. I would like to see the facilitator rein that in a little sooner, and keep the attendees on task on natural resource issues. I understand that everybody deserves to be heard, but we don't need to discuss issues that are not pertinent. We really didn't have time to address adequate answers to all the questions posed, and this was really the reason. I heard that from others as well.

No - except to clean up tech problems

I think that the breakout groups were great and helped us have focused conversation. Only thing that I thought was missing was the opportunity for the larger group to provide comments after reporting out on the breakout sessions. It seemed like all the smaller groups came up with a few novel ideas and it would have been useful to be able to ask questions or discuss those a little bit in the larger group. Otherwise, you might as well not have the larger group meeting and have more individual sessions next

time. I'd prefer keeping the larger group, the breakout sessions, and adding time for larger group discussion.

Attendance by the NET board members (all of them) to listen to our input

It's difficult being a recorder. It would be better to rely on someone other than a group member. Our recorder also reported and I thought her summary missed some key points.

The roundtable far exceeded my expectations. It was well organized and executed.

At beginning when everyone is there, explain to everyone how the program works among the different areas. We were lucky enough to have a facilitator in our break out who could explain the programs. Would help reduce some of the questions and to understand some things when they were presented.

"It is challenging to take notes while also fully participating in a group discussion. Women are disproportionately burdened with note-taking at meetings, and our breakout group was no exception. It would be nice to have a designated note taker who is not also a discussion participant. Perhaps the meeting facilitator?"

I liked that the notes could be viewed in real-time via the shared document feature. It allowed participants to clarify or expand upon their statements when necessary."

"I thought the Round Table was handled nicely.

Might be helpful to have a time limit on speaking; some participants in the breakout rooms dominated the conversation and got off-topic at times.

Discussion of weighting within funding categories. For example, we all seemed to agree that the funding categories were excellent, we also leaned towards emphasizing and supporting applications with significant education and climate change components.

Nothing I can think of right now.

Hopefully we can do at least one in person meeting.

Water issues are my area of concern. I do not know how the funds are allocated.

There were a couple times in the roundtable discussion where it may have been nice to have a member of the NET staff present to answer questions. Not a big deal as everything went smooth and I think the meeting was beneficial.

Keep the Zoom format so more of us can participate. I probably would not go if I had to drive to get to a face-to-face meeting.

I hope it's in person!

Hopefully in-person meeting will be possible.

Looking at my notes of all the group reports, it seemed 1 group may not have as much open discussion as all the others; focusing on funding & limiting the scope of NET. This is just my impression compared to the other reports which seemed broader in discussion & followed similarities of topics with other groups.

Not remembering which group I participated in, I felt everyone spoke & was willing to add information to what others had said during the round table discussion, becoming more comfortable with each other during the time. Increasing the Round Table discussion time may help &/or short Bio Information sheets on participants, may help, but would be challenging to verify truthfulness & not a snake in the grass. Although if the snake submitted a less than honest Bio, it would be on record!

Due to my health challenges of last year & wanting to volunteer in too many Organizations each working to improve the Environment in Nebraska back to a Healthier place when 50 years ago, as a 3rd grader entering Longfellow Elementary; ground water could be safely drank anywhere in the state!

That being said, for people with reading disabilities like me, it would be helpful for individuals to receive short notes highlights on NET to be able to get up to speed faster & look up more details on topics with the listed reference.

Realizing much of this is on the NET website, but individuals like me & my Daughter who are part of the "lucky" 70% that inherited ADHD learn differently.

Otherwise, I was very impressed with the numbers interested in NET & your operations of the Meeting?

With the improving of Gambling, I am wondering what the Future holds for NET? "

I felt I could have provided better input had I known the topics that were going to be discussed. While we still had good input in our breakout session from many people, I felt I could have provided more substantial thoughts if I had received the questions beforehand and had a little more time to think about them.

Yes - do the breakout groups in areas of interest

Not specifically. The attendees were generally prepared and conscientiously reflected on categories. Making sure that prospective attendees know the categories, ahead of the meeting(s), will continue to be important.

There was no "comments" opportunity at the end of this survey, so I'm including additional comments here. While the data is easier to sort without opinions, this is limiting to the goal of returning justifications for the information requested. For example, I didn't answer certain questions about whether the Trust should fund more larger or smaller projects. The merits of individual projects need to be discussed and ranked. An arbitrary policy related to fund distribution versus environmental scale risks compromising doing the most environmentally important things. While I know the value of doing both of these things, I would lean toward protecting opportunities to work at the largest feasible scales, I don't think it is accurate to say we need more larger grant applications just because... or vice versa. I don't like the survey question, without context.

It is always nice to meet in person.

The meeting was conducted in an excellent manner.

If the in-person meetings in five years go as well, that will be terrific. We had a great facilitator and note keeper.

Follow up on issues addresses this time

Hopefully, in 5 years, we will be able to meet in person. That will help facilitate a livelier discussion.

More structure to splitting up groups to include people attending for various reasons. Discussion was not natural in my group, only 3 participants had experience with NET and the other participants sat quietly. Encourage or make clear to people when signing up that they will be actively participating/giving feedback, and maybe send out the questions in advance so we have time to provide thoughtful answers.

I think the presence of an NET board member or representative in each breakout group may have inhibited some from speaking up about issues or concerns with the process. I do think that board members should attend or listen to recordings of the meetings so they can understand any issues or concerns but also think that it can hinder the process. Maybe record and exclude name and affiliation on comments?

On-site meeting with Board members and Gov attending.

A. Between now and five years, fund projects that will lead to intensive discussions in five years of the reevaluation of the NETF Mission and a transparent external review of the past benefits of the grants program.

B. Structure the Roundtables in a manner of greater public participation and construct a corollary public communication system for process and output of recommendations.

C. Tie needs, recommendations, and protections of the NETF to Legislative responsibilities.

If we're back in person, continuing this Zoom option would sure be nice.

Allow participants to speak freely without fear of repercussion in future funding requests. Perhaps this meeting was meant as a 5-year exercise, but it came on the heels of a very large issue by NET in the state, and format changes should have been allowed to address that.

## **Q21**

**If so, what additional categories would you like to see?**

Focus on community education and recycling.

Education and/or Climate Change

Projects should get bonus points for climate change mitigation features.

Dealing with climate change

Rather than a new category, I'd like to see a statewide needs assessment broken down by region. I think data is probably available from the University, Game and Parks, NRC, NRCS, Drought Mitigation Center, and scientific groups inside and outside the state. If that data were compiled it could be used to rank areas of most pressing need and money could be directed toward those needs. The point system could be altered to facilitate this. Also, I'd like to see a private legal screening of all proposals with those that are ineligible by statute with those being thrown out before any ranking begins. I think it would also be justifiable to pay external legal and technical experts so you get thorough and unbiased results.

Education.

"It would probably be timely to check what are the environmental needs in Nebraska.

The Game and Parks has a means for researching this.

I think the current ones are still important.

Incorporating Global Warming somehow could be useful.

I would like to see efforts toward the education of the interested public. Some of my friends with similar interests and concerns are not at all familiar with the mission of and operation of the Nebraska Environmental Trust. I am a member of the Nebraska Sierra Club. Before the curtailment caused by Covid--19 the Missouri Valley Group, the local group of SC, our organization held monthly, evening, educational programs for the public. I think that when we are able to resume this program series, we might invite speakers from NET to present on the mission, operation and scope of NET. If this is not feasible by January/February 2021, perhaps we could work together on creating a Zoom program for the public.

I think education is important. Sometimes it does not fit "neatly" into the above categories. On the other hand I would not kick out any of the five categories, in order to include education as a category of its own.

Climate

Climate change

As I admitted earlier, not totally sure what point values are given to each of the Categories to the applicant & if certain production practices for inputs needed to complete the project are counter to any of the other categories; shouldn't that automatically disqualify the application?

As an example, with say ethanol blending: requiring the applicator to identify what type of grain will be grown, where, using what method? If the grain is GMO Syngenta Corn that begins to turn starches into sugar in the mature kernel on the cob before harvesting, being grown on HEL that had been grassland with a pivot, with no terraces, in a high nitrate watershed; it seems to go against many of the other Categories goals!

Now if the corn is Certified Corn grown by a Certified Farm near the Ethanol Plant which used only Certified Corn & other products to make Ethanol; to be able to return the mash for livestock feed, may not be as offensive.

Perhaps instead of adding categories: increase the point values for applications that will help reduce climate change by the project they are doing & maybe in addition to increased point values, required reduction of climate change! The same with required Education component which could include involving local public schools, higher education, non-profits. Education should be for both Rural & Urban Populations.

Signage should be provided by NET & required to be put up on the main road or most visible area; during & 3 years after the contract period is over. The sign should include a website of NET & link to more information about the project, applicants & landowners.

Perhaps similar to NCR-SARE.

Climate change

Governor not get involved and turn it political. Also no corn products.

Climate change issues. These are so important to the future of all current categories. Not a political issue, an earth issue.

When considering grant funds, the importance of looking at how each category will be affected is essential to prevent the scenario of benefiting one area to the detriment of others.

Not necessarily a category, but I think Climate Change needs to be a factor that is evaluated across all categories similar to the way grants need to have an education component.

I think that climate change should be incorporated into EVERY category or have its own standalone category. It is the greatest challenge of our generation and we need to address it in every aspect of human life.

1. Human and community impacts on the Nebraska environment.
2. Climate Change, impacts, mitigations, and resiliencies.
3. Align grants with NRD watersheds and surface waters.
4. Protections and conservation of ground water sources.

Perhaps something related to education, though education is included in most if not all of the categories already, so maybe not. It was a discussion point.

### Q30

**It was noted at the Roundtable Meetings that the Trust needs to get its message out more to the public and promote great projects it has partnered with over the years. What suggestions or ideas do you have for us to accomplish this?**

Work with grantees to conduct "field" tours that include projects/efforts funded in part by the trust.

Celebrate successes more broadly - perhaps with social media/website featured project stories - perhaps monthly.

Not sure what the Trust is doing social media wise - but clearly there are a lot of way that the Trust could get information out via Facebook, Twitter, Podcasts (these are getting big apparently), NET and partners websites, etc.

The trust needs to create a 'presence'. There needs to be public outreach and media throughout Nebraska. I am a former resident of Colorado and they will continuously promote all of the good work being done by communities and grantees for environmentalism. The Trust needs to brand itself...

No Comment

I get most of my news from social media and radio. I also do some webinars and (pre covid) conferences. I organize some tour and events for landowners and promote NET at those events.

Create an open and continuous website that would explain and update all ET projects

Increase the frequency of articles submitted. Get national figures to identify the Trust as the gem it is. Nobody else has something like the Trust that I know of. Nebraskans need to know and feel proud of what they are doing. Sadly, Nebraskans always seem to be more impressed if a star tells them we are great.

Work with the lottery to get reports on social media maybe on Facebook what your lottery ticket has done here and here and here.

Local news channels; About Nebraska programs;

Explain to public amounts going to projects and list some for each region, notifying each region only so it is more personal.

Signage at project sites

Logos or signs to be displayed in the offices of organizations and agencies receiving NET funding.

Social Media

I think that the best grant relying on the original guidelines should be considered for funding.

Some will be large and some smaller.

I do not like that requests that are better funded with tax dollars or private funds take up Trust funds.

There must be transparency, too.

More articles in local publications?

The Nebraska Environmental Trust could create short films regarding working being completed using it as a tool to not only show off what's getting done in Nebraska, but also used as a tool to highlight all the wild places and conservation minded people that Nebraska has. Films can then be highlighted in commercials, on social media, and other media outlets.

I think all the methods you've tried below are fairly effective, especially signage. That's how many projects can demonstrate the lasting legacy of NET projects. I also think it could be useful to provide a summary of funded projects to the NE legislature, and encourage participants to reach out to radio shows or podcasts or programs to promote their respective projects.

Social media sharing of partner projects - for example, sharing outreach projects, or partner posts. Fontenelle Forest tags NET on outreach, but if NET actually shares the posts, it could reach people who are looking at what NET funds/does. It would help tell a more complete story with little effort on NET's part.

See my previous comment.

In today's world social media is huge for the younger generation. I believe numerous avenues are effective, but it isn't going to reach everyone. Newspapers are more likely to reach an older generation. TV and radio ads can be beneficial, but they may not be the best avenues either for reaching the younger generation.

Thank goodness Paul Hammel showed up for the granting decision meeting last winter. My trust in the Trust, was shaken to the core by the ethanol decision. We, the public, must be constantly vigilant against grabs for this money. It looks like you are putting out the press releases about the meetings. I talked with one person at the Journal Star, who said they were so busy with Covid, that they missed it. Unusual times.

Traveling workshops/demonstration days/project showcase days open to the public

Wider publication of meetings and agenda; publicity for grants and grantees and impact on Nebraska environment. I believe publicity for many grants are deliberately stifled because they are marginal, at best.

Radio and TV spots. Feature some great projects on a platform like Pure Nebraska. Anniversary year is coming up; a documentary on the work of the Trust over the years and brief look forward would be good.

Past years had PSA-like commercials on TV

Regular articles in Nebraska magazines, Mid-West Messenger, offer articles in State Newspapers, find out what NRDs, Game & Parks, are doing. NET Radio & Television programs, have past Applicants on to discuss the changes that have happened from their Project; Big Red Worms (both positive & negative). Lincoln City TV interview, Omaha (?), KZUM Community Radio, Get on How's It Growing with Bob Hendricks, Bob works at Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. Contact Sarah Browning at Lancaster County Extension about posting in the Newsletter! Podcast.

On the NET Website, do you have Nebraska Map with successful grants located by colored dots according to year, that a mouse point could hover over to give more information on the project? If there is too many, break Nebraska Maps down to 5 year periods.

Signage by Projects.

This year is the first I ever knew anything like this existed. Plus 5 years seems like a long time to go without a review. Maybe shorten it to 3 years and advertise on the local News channels via TV. Not so much social media.

More general publicity about project success stories etc

This is not my area of expertise, but I know that NET is represented at many forums. There are areas where the NET's mission is threatened or perhaps misunderstood, including:

How the trust was enacted. There have clearly been inappropriate legislative intrusions on the Trust. I suspect that opinion-editorials or PSA by respected individuals is appropriate.

Ag friendly, support programs. With property tax issues so prominent in landowner's minds, they struggle to see how "environmental" programs are providing direct benefits to them. The reality is that landowners that work with environmental programs, supported by the Trust, benefit directly by cost offsets on net-loss acres. Environmental and/or wildlife interests are becoming the go-to scapegoat for property tax woes. NET needs to be seen as directly contributing to landowner benefits. Ag related magazine articles/outlets seems appropriate.

More public service messages on PBS and NET Radio.

Write newspaper articles about the projects to educate the community about their current status and future goals. Maintain a Facebook page highlighting each project including current work and future goals. Work with environmental groups to spread the word with its members and the community. Hold public discussions, network with public libraries, universities and public schools to educate young people about these projects and the importance of this work.

Social media and directing people to the NET website

Hold a presence on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Most projects or partners post about NET-funded projects online and can easily tag NET if you have an account to raise awareness for all involved. You may also consider doing "project takeovers" where you provide a grantee with social media logins and allow them to highlight their project for a day or a week.

So much of life is now online for most people. The trust should have a dedicated pr/marketing/outreach staff member who runs and maintains a facebook page, an instagram account, a blog, and a twitter account in addition to maintaining past methods of outreach. I would love to see a storyboard type post/blog that highlights current NET grants around the state or past successes! I would love to see a story that focuses on grantees with expert knowledge that allows them a platform to share that knowledge and increases their own organizational reach. There are great models for this in Nebraska including organizations you have funded! Platte River Timelapse, Audubon Society, Xerces Society, and The Nature Conservancy come to mind.

A. For grants of \$25,000 or more, require a ""press release"" narrative in the final project report; NETF staff to select annual best practices projects and distribute selected releases.

B. Reserve annual funding for Best Practices Awards, after completion of the granted project.

C. Establish an annual Review Board of journalists, community leaders, sustainability experts, and citizens to judge NETF Best Practice Projects.

Local media partnerships? News Channel Nebraska seems popular lately, but also standards like Nebraska Public Television and Radio. World Herald/Lincoln Journal Star monthly feature? Maybe NebraskaLAND should have a monthly NET grant feature? And, as much as I hate to say it... social media...

Here in rural Nebraska though, people are still getting a lot of their info from town papers, those papers are always hungry for press releases about something relevant to their area.

I believe that a program to explain the use of conservation easements as a tool to facilitate conservation projects. There is a lot of misinformation that has presented easements in a negative way and the

public including some of the current members of the NET board need to take advantage of their positions to help them understand the use of conservation easements.

Virtual tours of some past projects in the Trust's newsletter.

Social media, television, host events/tours