

MINUTES

Nebraska Environmental Trust
Grants Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 16, 2025
1:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Grants Committee Chair Coleman called the Grants Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in Suite 310 at 2077 N St, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Advanced notice of the meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on October 9, 2025. The agenda and documents to be considered at the meeting were provided. The Open Meetings Act was posted near the meeting room entrance and on the Nebraska Environmental Trust website.

Roll call was conducted, and a quorum was present.

Members Present (5):

District II: Grants Committee Chair Garfield Coleman, Omaha

District III: Josh Andersen, Edgar; Rod Christen, Steinauer

State Agency Representative: Jesse Bradley, Director, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy & Environment; Tim McCoy, Director, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Members Absent (1):

District I: Jeff Kanger, Lincoln

Staff Present:

Holly Adams, Executive Director; Lana Merani, Grants Administrator; Madison Moe, Grants Assistant; Karen Plautz-Castro, Administrative Specialist

2. Public Comment

Jesse Bradley, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy & Environment (DWEE), addressed whether the actions to be undertaken by their proposed grant would be considered regulatory (Agenda Item 4). Bradley stated that the intent of the application was to go beyond any potential regulatory requirements to be considered by the Board – such as those which empower DWEE via state or federal statute to undertake floodplain mapping and management efforts.

3. Approval of September 25, 2025, Grants Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Christen, "I move to approve the September 25, 2025, Grants Committee meeting minutes."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Andersen, Bradley, Christen, Coleman

5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

4. Determination of Eligibility of Applications for Grant Funding

Director Adams gave her recommendations as per her obligation under Title 137: "The Executive Director shall review the eligibility criteria to provide an eligibility recommendation to the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee of the Board shall review each such application and shall make a preliminary recommendation of approval or rejection of the proposal for eligibility based on the recommendation of the Executive Director." Director Adams brought forward for consideration the

application which was recommended to be ineligible (26-127) and 6 applications – out of a total of 73 – for which additional discussion regarding eligibility was warranted. It was noted that after the Executive Director has made her recommendations to the Grants Committee, the Committee will then draft their eligibility recommendations which are presented before the full Board for consideration. A grant must be determined by the full Board to be eligible before it will undertake the scoring process.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Christen, “I move to determine that grant application 26-127 is not eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and affirmation.”

Discussion: It was recommended and then determined that the application was not eligible on the grounds that it neither effectively, nor coherently, addressed the application questions.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Andersen, Bradley, Christen, Coleman
5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Director Adams presented to the Grants Committee NET grant application 26-104 for discussion about whether it would provide primarily private versus public benefits. “Benefits from a Nebraska Environmental Trust Grant must be public in nature. Private benefit, especially private financial gain, must be incidental to the project” (04.005). While everyone, including private companies and individuals, is welcome to apply for grants from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the primary focus of the proposed project must be one that prioritizes public benefits which are greater than that of any private benefit.

Motion by Andersen, seconded by Christen, “I move to determine that grant application 26-104 is not eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and affirmation.”

Discussion: Discussion focused on how the Grants Committee would measure public versus private gains in terms of overall environmental impact, and it was determined by the Committee that the potential benefits generated from the project would be primarily private in nature.

Voting Aye: Christen, McCoy, Andersen, Bradley, Coleman
5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Director Adams brought forward for discussion NET grant application 26-105 with specific focus on regulations and the actions/activities which are mandated by regulations. Title 137 directs that the NET is not to fund projects which directly fund or oversee regulatory programs, nor is the NET to fund projects that are mandated by regulation(s). For NET grant application 26-105, the Grants Committee sought to determine whether the proposed actions regarding oil filter disposal from the grant application should be considered regulatory actions. Title 128, as detailed in the meeting documents, directs how pertinent entities are to properly dispose of their oil filters so that the filters are not considered as hazardous waste.

Motion by Andersen, seconded by Christen, “I move to determine that grant application 26-105 is eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and affirmation.”

Discussion: Discussion centered around the internal procedural guidance sheet which was provided in the meeting documents and outlined the evaluation process for applications which can be used to determine if they are regulatory programs and/or if their actions have been mandated by regulations. There was discussion about whether the applicant controlled the regulatory program (as proscribed by Title 128), whether the applicant would simply be abiding by the program’s guidelines by undertaking these actions, or whether the applicant would be going above and beyond that which was required of them by Title 128 through their proposed actions for proper oil filter disposal.

Voting Aye: Bradley, Christen, McCoy, Andersen, Coleman
5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Director Adams brought forward for discussion NET grant application 26-141 along with two Nebraska State Statutes which encompass regulations pertinent to floodplain management in relation to the Nebr. Dept. of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE). Director Adams presented for discussion the topic of regulatory compliance and the requirements of state statute. Under consideration: whether the actions proposed in DWEE's application had them going above and beyond their directive to update floodplain maps which "shall delineate the flood plain of the base flood and, when information is available, the floodway and flood fringe of such flood plain" (Nebr. Rev. Stat. 31-1018) to local governments thereby "establishing a minimum standard for local flood plain management regulation" (Neb. Rev. Stat. 31-1017).

Motion by Andersen, seconded by Christen, "I move to determine that grant application 26-141 is eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and affirmation."

Discussion: Christen questioned if the essence of the regulatory matter on the table should be focused on whether DWEE was mandated to update the maps versus if they were proposing to update the maps voluntarily. It was discussed whether the proposed updates to the floodplain maps, in and of itself, could be deemed as regulatory; however, it did not appear that DWEE's intent was to use these maps to update rules and regulations regarding floodplain management. Chair Coleman asked for a point of clarification regarding whether DWEE had been federally mandated to update and distribute floodplain management maps previously; there was no evidence found by Director Adams which indicated that DWEE had been mandated by the federal government in the past to create and distribute these floodplain maps.

Voting Aye: Andersen, Christen, McCoy, Coleman
Abstain: Bradley
4 Voted Aye. 1 Abstention. Motion carried.

Director Adams presented 26-163 to the Committee for discussion regarding NET's priorities under Title 137 as they pertain to private gain versus public benefits; it was noted that, as per their application disclosure, the applicant was a private entity requesting the purchase of an upgraded manure spreader to be used primarily on private properties.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Andersen, "I move to determine that grant application 26-163 is eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and affirmation."

Discussion: Andersen discussed the fact that everyone is welcome to apply to NET for grant funding which includes, but is not limited to, individuals and private producers. Andersen argued that it does not go against NET's rules and regulations to provide funding to projects that do provide some sort of personal gain/benefit, and these gains should not automatically cause such projects to be deemed ineligible. Christen stated that the proposed application appears to fulfill the minimum standards of a few of NET's environmental categories, and that one could compare the purchase of a manure spreader by a private company with that of the purchase of a no-till drill by a non-profit entity.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Andersen, Bradley, Christen, Coleman
5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Director Adams presented 26-168 to the Committee for discussion which was focused on whether the proposed potential gains would be primarily private versus public (Title 137). 26-168's applicant, a private individual, proposed purchasing equipment which will be used for the creation of biochar to reduce the waste from invasive tree clearing.

Motion by Andersen, seconded by Christen, "I move to determine that grant application 26-168 is eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and affirmation."

Discussion: Discussion reiterated the fact that everyone is welcome to apply to NET for grant funding which includes, but is not limited to, individuals and private producers. It was noted during discussion that the measurability of the balance between potential private gain and the generation of greater public benefit was difficult to establish due to the lack of clarity regarding an agreed upon standard of measurement.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Andersen, Bradley, Christen, Coleman
5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Director Adams asked whether there were any other grants that the Grants Committee would like to bring forward for additional consideration. If there were none, then she stated that all remaining projects would require a motion so that they could be recommended as eligible and forwarded on to the full Board for consideration.

Motion by Andersen, seconded by McCoy, "I move to determine that grant applications 26-101, 26-102, 26-103, 26-106, 26-107, 26-109, 26-110, 26-111, 26-112, 26-113, 26-114, 26-115, 26-116, 26-117, 26-118, 26-119, 26-121, 26-122, 26-123, 26-124, 26-125, 26-128, 26-129, 26-130, 26-131, 26-132, 26-133, 26-134, 26-135, 26-136, 26-137, 26-138, 26-139, 26-140, 26-142, 26-143, 26-144, 26-146, 26-147, 26-148, 26-149, 26-150, 26-151, 26-152, 26-153, 26-154, 26-155, 26-156, 26-157, 26-158, 26-159, 26-160, 26-161, 26-162, 26-164, 26-165, 26-166, 26-167, 26-169, 26-170, 26-171, 26-172, 26-173, are eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and approval."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Christen, McCoy, Andersen, Bradley, Coleman
5 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Motion by Andersen, seconded by Christen, "I move to determine that grant applications 26-108, 26-120, 26-126, 26-145, and 26-172 are eligible and forward to the NET Board for review and approval."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Bradley, Christen, Andersen, Coleman
Abstain: McCoy
4 Voted Aye. 1 Abstention. Motion carried.

5. Grant Portal Scoring Process Explanation

Director Adams gave a brief overview of the scoring process in the NET Grants Portal and informed the Board members that they are welcome to reach out for additional information.

6. Next Meeting

The next Grants Committee meeting will be held December 11, 2025, at 2077 N Street, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE at 1:30 pm.

9. Adjourn

Chair Coleman adjourned the meeting at 2:19 p.m.

Holly Adams

Holly Adams, Executive Director