

AGENDA

Nebraska Environmental Trust Board
Special Meeting
Thursday, January 8, 2026
1:30 PM

Nebraska Environmental Trust
Telegraph Lofts West
2077 N St, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE

1. Call to Order
 - a. Roll call
 - b. Verify Quorum
 - c. Notice of Meeting: Published Saturday, December 27, 2025
 - d. Notification of Open Meetings Act Posting
2. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of November 6, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
3. Public Comment
4. **Public Hearing on Proposed Funding List for the 2026 Grant Cycle**
5. Grants Committee Report and Recommendations: Award of 2026 Grants
6. UNL Public Policy Center Report on 5-Year Funding Category Review
7. Basic Grant Contract updates
8. Directors Report
9. Next Meeting: Thursday, February 5, 2026, Telegraph Lofts West, 2077 N St, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE 68510, 1:30 p.m.
10. Adjourn

****This agenda contains a list of subjects known at the time of its distribution on December 22, 2025. A current copy is kept on file at the offices of the Nebraska Environmental Trust, 2077 N St, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE 68510. Except for items of an emergency nature, the agenda will not be altered later than 24 hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting. Public comment may be offered on topics within the purview of the Board on any item before the Board by completing the sign-in sheet available at the meeting.**

Consent Agenda

Item #: 2

Object: To implement a consent agenda

Contact Person: Holly Adams

For: ACTION

Attachment: 5 pages

BACKGROUND

The consent agenda includes a list of routine, uncontroversial items that can be approved in a single motion, with no discussion and a single vote.

EXPLANATION

A consent agenda streamlines the approval of regular and routine agenda items and allows the Board to focus on more substantive issues. For a consent agenda to work, it is essential that all members review the items before the meeting. Although a member may request a consent agenda item to be moved to the regular agenda for discussion during a meeting, it is best to bring issues to the attention of the Executive Director before the meeting. The item can be placed on the regular agenda if further discussion is needed.

Consent Agenda Items:

a. November 6, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes

Members may request corrections to unapproved minutes before the day of the meeting. If a correction is made, the draft minutes will be recirculated to the Board.

PROPOSAL

To utilize a consent agenda to enhance meeting productivity, engage members, and create more time for strategic discussions that require debate and deliberation.

Recommended motion: "I move to approve the Consent Agenda."

DRAFT MINUTES

Nebraska Environmental Trust Board
Fourth Quarter Meeting
Thursday, November 6, 2025
1:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Chair Quandahl called the meeting of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board (NET) to order at 1:31 p.m. in Suite 310, 2077 N St, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Advanced notice of the meeting and public hearing was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on October 23, 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 (10):

District I: Jeff Kanger, Lincoln; Ted Vasko, Papillion

District II: Garfield Coleman, Omaha; Roger Helgoth, Omaha; Chair Mark Quandahl, Omaha

District III: Eric Hansen, North Platte

State Agency Representatives: Jesse Bradley, Director, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment; Matt Manning, Chief Water Officer, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment; Tim McCoy, Director, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission; Ashley Newmyer, Interim Director, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Members Absent (4):

District I: James Hellbusch, Columbus

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

State Agency Representatives: Sherry Vinton, Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

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

2. Consent Agenda

Background on Consent Agenda Items

The consent agenda included the August 7, 2025, Board meeting minutes, financial reports, approval to set financials aside for audit, the Grant Disbursement Report, the Nebraska Lottery Proceeds Allocation Report, and the Grant Administration Report.

Motion by Kanger, seconded by Bradley, "I move to approve the consent agenda."

Voting Aye: Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment

Ashley Garrelts, Sandhills Task Force, Broken Bow, spoke on behalf of their grant modification requests (Agenda Item #8.b.) which would enable the Sandhills Task Force to continue promoting grazing practices that improve rangeland health, benefiting both livestock and wildlife habitats.

4. Directors Report

a. New NET Staff

Holly Adams, Executive Director of the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), introduced new staff to the Board. The agency's new Grants Administrator is Lana Merani and Administrative Specialist is Karen Plautz-Castro.

b. Update on Five-Year Funding Category Review

Executive Director Holly Adams gave an overview of the upcoming Five-Year Funding Category public meetings scheduled for November 2025. A contract is in place with the UNL Public Policy Center, and they have set up in-person meetings in each of the three districts and one Zoom meeting for those who may not be able to attend in-person.

- District I, November 18th at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, Denton
- District II, November 19th at Clint Johannes Education Building at Lake Wanahoo, Wahoo
- District III, November 20th at - Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce (Buffalo Room), Kearney
- Virtual on Zoom, Tuesday, December 2nd at the NET office in Lincoln.

The UNL Public Policy Center is advertising these reviews on behalf of NET and will be sending out publications and advertising in each district's newspaper, posting on social media, distributing emails and accepting written comments from the public. The UNL Public Policy Center will facilitate meetings, compile public comments, prepare the report, and present findings at the January 8, 2026, NET Board meeting.

5. Public Hearing on Proposed Eligibility Recommendations for the 2026 Grant Cycle

As presiding officer, Quandahl opened the public hearing at 1:42 p.m. to accept testimony on the eligibility recommendations for the 2026 Grant Cycle under consideration by the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 81-15,167 through 81-15,176.

Two written records were received and distributed to the Board prior to the meeting.

Testimony During Hearing

Elizabeth Elliott – City of Lincoln, gave an overview of timelines, described delays and is requesting NET Grant #25-111 for the Multimodal Transportation Center be extended one year six months due to federal administrative delays.

Nolan Lemna – Individual applicant, present additional details beyond those outlined within his grant application to the Board regarding NET Grant application #26-123. The goal of the proposed project is to create a reward system for agricultural producers who practice sustainable methods and to then donate food products (such as beef, eggs, poultry) to food banks and nonprofit organizations.

Katie Patrick – Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska, described the benefits of their sustainability department (regift, resell, recycle) and how NET grant application #26-109 for the Hastings Campus would benefit from a new, energy efficient warehouse to expand and continue their recycling efforts.

Treaven Scheideler – Sandhills Biochar, outlined the issue posed by red cedar trees and described how grant NET Grant application #26-168 would offer landowners an on-site solution for removing invasive trees from their property while minimizing greenhouse gas emissions through a localized approach.

The public hearing concluded at 2:01 p.m.

6. Grants Committee Report and Recommendations for Grant Application Eligibility

After the September 2, 2025, grant application deadline, the Grants Committee received the applications after Holly Adams, Executive Director, reviewed them for completeness. The Executive Director presented her eligible recommendations to the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee reviewed 73 applications for eligibility at the Grants Committee meeting on October 16, 2025, and determined 71 were eligible.

After the Grants Committee makes its recommendations to the NET Board for consideration, the NET Board may adopt or revise the eligibility determinations. After the Board's final determination, all eligible applications will be referred back to the Grants Committee who will then use the project ranking and scoring system to determine the Committee's award and funding recommendations.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee:

26-101, 26-102, 26-103, 26-105, 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, 26-163, 26-164, 26-165, 26-166, 26-168 26-169, 26-170, 26-171, and 26-173."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-108, 26-120, 26-126, 26-145, and 26-172."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Quandahl

Abstaining: McCoy

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

9 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by McCoy, "As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following project be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-141."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Kanger, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Coleman, Hansen, Quandahl

Voting Nay: Helgoth

Abstaining: Manning, Bradley

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

07 Voted Aye. 1 Nay. 2 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, “As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be eligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-167.”

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Helgoth, Quandahl

Abstaining: Hansen

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

9 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Coleman, seconded by Kanger, “As Chairman representing the Grants Committee, I move that the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board deems the following projects be ineligible, as recommended by the Grants Committee: 26-104 and 26-127”.

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Manning, McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

7. Closeout Report of Grants

A list of projects that either expired or closed out early was reviewed by the Board.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Kanger, "I move to approve the report provided and presented by NET staff, for the closeout of the projects presented in the report."

Discussion: It was noticed that some projects did not use all their allotted funds. Executive Director Adams explained that it is common for applicants to find more cost-effective methods to complete tasks or they may have overestimated the amount of funds needed to complete their project. Any funds not used are returned to the NET.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

8. Project Modification Requests

a. Extension Request – 25-111 – City of Lincoln, Lincoln Multimodal Center

The City of Lincoln requested a one year and six-month extension to their project due to a delay in receiving the execution of the federal RAISE grant agreement. Due to this, the grantee postponed construction start date. They're expecting the contract to be approved by the end of 2025 with construction beginning in July 2026.

Motion by Vasko, seconded by Hansen, “I move to approve the City of Lincoln’s request to extend project 25-111 until December 31, 2027.”

Discussion: Brief clarification that 25-111 is a 2025 grant still in their first year.

Voting Aye: Newmyer, Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Hansen, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

10 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

b. Project Modification Request – 23-166, 24-175, 25-161 – Sandhills Task Force

The application and proposed budgets of these applications did not define the specific project activities, for their project objective “Planned Grazing Systems”. Sandhills Task Force is requesting a modification of NET grant applications #23-166, 24-175, #25-161 to include the following items under this objective: drilling livestock water wells, installing livestock water pumps, livestock water tanks and water pipeline, and installing or relocating livestock fence.

Motion by McCoy, seconded by Bradley, "I move to approve the Sandhills Task Force’s request to modify projects 23-166, 24-175, and 25-161 to include drilling livestock water wells, installing livestock water pumps, livestock water tanks, and livestock water pipelines, and installing or relocating livestock fence."

Discussion: These projects which mostly involve work on private land were discussed. NET encourages all applicants to apply, including individuals, if the public benefit outweighs the private benefit. To be eligible for reimbursement, applications must include detailed descriptions of contractual services and equipment. According to current policy and prior discussions, items such as fencing, pipelines, tanks, and wells are not classified as real estate improvements.

Voting Aye: Vasko, Bradley, Coleman, Helgoth, Kanger, Manning, McCoy, Newmyer

Abstaining: Hansen, Quandahl

Absent: Andersen, Christen, Hellbusch, Vinton

8 Voted Aye. 2 Abstained. Motion carried.

9. Next Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 2026, at Nebraska Environmental Trust, 2077 N St, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE 68510, 1:30 p.m. A public hearing will be held by the Board to accept testimony on the proposed funding list for the 2026 grant cycle.

10. Adjourn

Chair Quandahl adjourned the meeting at 2:27 p.m.

Holly Adams
Executive Director

Grants Committee Report and Recommendations Award of 2026 Grants

Item #: 5

Object: Award Grants for the 2026 Grant Cycle

Contact Person: Garfield Coleman, Holly Adams

For: ACTION

Attachment: 3 pages

BACKGROUND

The Grants Committee consists of six members of the NET Board. The Chairman position rotates each year by Congressional District. One member from each Congressional District and two Agency Directors are required. These members are appointed every August by the incoming Chairman of the NET Board.

At the May 1, 2025, NET Board Meeting, following a public hearing, the Board adopted the Project Ranking System for the 2026 grant round.

The Grants Committee reviewed 73 applications for eligibility, determined 71 projects were eligible, scored eligible projects, and developed recommendations for funding.

EXPLANATION

The Nebraska Environmental Trust received 73 applications submitted by the September 2, 2025 deadline. The NET Grants Committee met on October 16, 2025, to develop a recommendation of eligible projects. At the November 6, 2025, NET Board Meeting, the Board approved the Grants Committee's eligibility recommendations, moving 71 projects to scoring.

The Grants Committee members independently reviewed the applications, including the applicant's answers to each of the scoring criteria, reviewed the applicable standard, then made a scoring determination on each scoring criteria.

On December 11, 2025, the Grants Committee developed their recommendations for funding. The Committee recommends funding projects with a minimum average score of 30 points or higher. Some of the projects had reduced recommended funding amounts due to limitations set on project administration expenses.

- **Rank Order Listing** – The projects are presented in rank order by rated score, including a recommendation for funding amounts. - Pages 5-1 through 5-3.
- **Written Testimony** - Written testimony submitted for award recommendations – found in the back of the board packet.

Rating	App ID	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Term of Request (Years)	Requested Year 1	Requested Year 2	Requested Year 3	Total Amount Requested	Total Committee Recommended Award
40	26-109	Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska	Hastings CSS Waste Reduction and Warehouse Project	1	\$ 435,450	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 435,450	\$ 435,450
39.33	26-166	Conservation Nebraska	Common Ground	2	\$ 175,000	\$ 175,000	\$ -	\$ 350,000	\$ 350,000
39	26-134	Nebraska Community Foundation For Business of Rainwater Basin Joint Venture	Happy Cows; Happy Wetlands III	3	\$ 101,813	\$ 101,813	\$ 101,817	\$ 305,443	\$ 305,443
38.83	26-107	Lewis & Clark Natural Resources District	Smart Water Solutions - Water Resources Technology & Conservation	3	\$ 143,843	\$ 130,843	\$ 128,344	\$ 403,030	\$ 403,030
38.67	26-113	Pheasants Forever, Inc.	Habitat Share Program	2	\$ 267,000	\$ 252,000	\$ -	\$ 519,000	\$ 519,000
38.67	26-168	Treaven Scheideler	Sandhills Biochar	1	\$ 91,385	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 91,385	\$ 91,385
38	26-157	Nebraska Community Foundation for Business of Rainwater Basin Joint Venture	Growing and Expanding Nebraska's Core Grasslands	3	\$ 390,833	\$ 390,833	\$ 390,834	\$ 1,172,500	\$ 1,172,500
37.67	26-140	Rebecca Ravenkamp	Using Livestock Technology for Resource Conservation	3	\$ 48,709	\$ 349	\$ 2,969	\$ 52,027	\$ 52,027
37.67	26-160	Lower Platte South Natural Resources District	Pecan Creek Wetland Complex	3	\$ 239,052	\$ 76,034	\$ 372,062	\$ 687,148	\$ 687,148
37.33	26-112	Pheasants Forever, Inc.	Pathway For Wildlife, Ranchers, Farmers, and Communities	3	\$ 331,000	\$ 321,000	\$ 321,000	\$ 973,000	\$ 973,000
37.17	26-106	Village of Orleans	Village of Orleans STARR Community Improvement	2	\$ 244,350	\$ 227,650	\$ -	\$ 472,000	\$ 472,000
37.17	26-122	Southeast Weed Management Area	Preserving Diverse and Resilient Grasslands in Southeast Nebraska Through Sericea Lespedeza Control	1	\$ 16,250	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 16,250	\$ 16,250
37	26-120	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Enhancing prairie and woodland in the Niobrara River Valley	3	\$ 170,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000
36.83	26-114	Quail Forever	Mobile Prescribed Burn Equipment, Trainings, and Outreach	2	\$ 168,450	\$ 84,050	\$ -	\$ 252,500	\$ 252,500
36.8	26-145	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Statewide Grassland Initiative	2	\$ 350,000	\$ 350,000	\$ -	\$ 700,000	\$ 700,000
36.33	26-131	Pheasants Forever, Inc.	Community Based Approach to Increasing Public Access on Private Lands	2	\$ 285,000	\$ 285,000	\$ -	\$ 570,000	\$ 570,000
36.17	26-137	Gretna Sanitation, Inc.	Eastern Nebraska CNG Refuse Truck Project	1	\$ 80,629	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 80,629	\$ 80,629
35.5	26-115	Trailblazer Resource Conservation & Development Council	Electronics Recycling Events	1	\$ 13,250	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 13,250	\$ 12,233
35.5	26-117	Lauritzen Gardens	From Waste to Wonder: Water Detention & Habitat Restoration at the Oasis, Lauritzen Gardens	1	\$ 71,329	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 71,329	\$ 71,329
35.17	26-151	Nebraska Community Foundation For Business of Rainwater Basin Joint Venture	Rainwater Basin Watershed Restoration and Assessment Project	3	\$ 109,750	\$ 109,750	\$ 109,750	\$ 329,250	\$ 329,250
35.17	26-161	Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District	Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District Meter Upgrades and Water Efficiency Project	3	\$ 60,800	\$ 60,790	\$ 60,785	\$ 182,375	\$ 182,375
35.17	26-167	Sandhills Task Force	Sandhills Ecosystem Stewardship Project: Improving Habitat and Resiliency	3	\$ 59,000	\$ 238,000	\$ 453,000	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000
35	26-116	Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development	Early Detection and Integrated Management of Invasive Plants	3	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 72,000	\$ 71,820
35	26-149	Lower Platte Weed Management Area	Lower Platte River & Tributaries - Water Conveyance and Habitat Improvement Project	3	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 120,000	\$ 120,000
34.83	26-148	Nebraska Statewide Arboretum	Greener Towns	3	\$ 131,283	\$ 155,669	\$ 126,216	\$ 413,168	\$ 413,168

Rating	App ID	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Term of Request (Years)	Requested Year 1	Requested Year 2	Requested Year 3	Total Amount Requested	Total Committee Recommended Award
34.33	26-102	Southwest Weed Management	2026 - 2027 Western Republican River Basin Riparian Habitat Project	1	\$ 186,960	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 186,960	\$ 186,960
34.33	26-170	Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust, Inc.	Riverine Wetland Management to Benefit Nebraska Species of Concern	2	\$ -	\$ 325,000	\$ -	\$ 325,000	\$ 325,000
34.17	26-150	Keep Omaha Beautiful	Trees for Tomorrow: Expanding and Understanding Omaha's Urban Canopy	3	\$ 148,951	\$ 147,290	\$ 109,740	\$ 405,981	\$ 405,981
34.17	26-164	Lindsay Academy	Seeds of Tomorrow	1	\$ 8,425	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,425	\$ 8,425
34	26-169	Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom, a program of Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation	Agriculture and the Environment, Education and Outreach	1	\$ 91,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 91,000	\$ 91,000
33.33	26-143	Two Rivers Public Health Department	Nuisance to Nature Program	3	\$ 332,530	\$ 333,860	\$ 337,530	\$ 1,003,920	\$ 983,920
33	26-165	Sandhills Weed Management Area	Sandhills WMA Invasive Species Management, Biocontrol and Education II	3	\$ 228,550	\$ 188,950	\$ 98,950	\$ 516,450	\$ 516,450
32.67	26-138	Audubon Great Plains	South Platte River Trail Prairie Enhancement	3	\$ 42,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 3,500	\$ 54,500	\$ 54,500
32.67	26-163	Traudt Enterprises, Inc.	Variable Rate Manure Spreader	1	\$ 180,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 180,000	\$ 180,000
32.5	26-139	Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation	Community Habitat Kits to Support Pollinators	3	\$ 57,415	\$ 95,146	\$ 124,997	\$ 277,558	\$ 277,558
32.5	26-162	Nebraska Community Foundation for benefit of Rainwater Basin Joint Venture	Grassland Enhancement at Harlan County Reservoir	3	\$ 128,083	\$ 92,208	\$ 12,784	\$ 233,075	\$ 233,075
32	26-172	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on behalf of Nebraska Grassland Alliance	Grasslands for Generations: Shared Stories for a Shared Future	3	\$ 670,500	\$ 190,000	\$ 127,000	\$ 987,500	\$ 987,500
31.83	26-123	Nolan Lemna	Sustainable Sustenance: Environmentally impactful, community driven	3	\$ 67,010	\$ 67,010	\$ 67,010	\$ 201,030	\$ 201,030
31.67	26-136	The Nature Conservancy	Prescribed Fire Training Exchange 2026	1	\$ 46,350	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 46,350	\$ 46,350
31.67	26-147	Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District	Observing Water and Nutrient Mobility in the Vadose Zone	3	\$ 426,452	\$ 81,578	\$ 37,460	\$ 545,490	\$ 545,490
31.67	26-154	Twin Valley Weed Management Area	Eastern Republican and Little Blue Watershed Improvement Project	1	\$ 118,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 118,000	\$ 118,000
31.6	26-126	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Rainwater Basin Wetland Management	3	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 450,000	\$ 450,000
31.6	26-141	Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment	Lower Elkhorn and North Fork Elkhorn Floodplain Mapping	3	\$ 101,816	\$ 145,624	\$ 106,275	\$ 353,715	\$ 353,715
31.5	26-130	Platte Valley Weed Management Area	Invasive Plant Species Control Along the Central Platte River	3	\$ 280,500	\$ 280,500	\$ 230,500	\$ 791,500	\$ 791,500
31.5	26-173	Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	Memphis Lake Renovation	2	\$ 39,200	\$ 110,200	\$ -	\$ 149,400	\$ 149,400
31	26-133	SID 162 Millard Park	Bank Stabilization Phase II	1	\$ 1,000,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
30.83	26-124	Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska - Environmental Protection Department	Advancing the Winnebago Watershed-Based Plan: Phase 2 (Kelly Pond), Enhanced Monitoring Capacity and Data Collection	1	\$ 133,411	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 133,411	\$ 133,411
30.83	26-125	Lower Platte North Natural Resources District	No-Till Grass Drill 2026	1	\$ 30,900	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 30,900	\$ 30,900
30.83	26-128	Village of Leigh	Park Waterway Deepening and Clean Up	1	\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
30.6	26-108	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Niobrara Lake Improvement Project	1	\$ 500,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000
30.33	26-110	Pine Lake Association	Watershed work and Lake excavation	1	\$ 184,200	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 184,200	\$ 184,200
30.17	26-105	Metropolitan Utilities District	Used Oil Filter Recycling Project	1	\$ 21,520	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,520	\$ 21,520
30	26-171	The Nature Conservancy	Healthy Habitat on the Niobrara River	3	\$ 18,466	\$ 18,466	\$ 18,466	\$ 55,398	\$ 55,398

Rating	App ID	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Term of Request (Years)	Requested Year 1	Requested Year 2	Requested Year 3	Total Amount Requested	Total Committee Recommended Award
29.83	26-121	Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District	MNNRD Educational Complex	1	\$ 1,693,517	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,693,517	\$ -
29.33	26-158	Keep Chadron Beautiful	Dawes County Recycling Expansion and Education Project	3	\$ 108,400	\$ 86,900	\$ 86,900	\$ 282,200	\$ -
28.83	26-146	Nebraska Recycling Council	Recycling Equipment Grants	2	\$ 378,870	\$ 382,625	\$ -	\$ 761,495	\$ -
28.67	26-132	MVR LLC	Island Oasis Rain Garden	1	\$ 85,094	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 85,094	\$ -
28.67	26-156	Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	PRBE Perkins Wetland Restoration	1	\$ 96,500	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 96,500	\$ -
28	26-153	Keep Nebraska Beautiful	Keep Nebraska Beautiful Used Oil Collection Program (2026 - 2027 Application)	1	\$ 60,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 60,000	\$ -
27.83	26-142	Lower Platte North Natural Resources District	Shell Creek Enhancement Plan: 2026-2028	3	\$ 66,500	\$ 67,000	\$ 66,500	\$ 200,000	\$ -
27.67	26-101	ROAM Share (dba Heartland Bike Share)	The Free Rides Project	3	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 240,000	\$ -
27.33	26-129	Four Corners Health Department	Household Hazardous Waste Collection	3	\$ 34,950	\$ 36,650	\$ 38,425	\$ 110,025	\$ -
27.17	26-135	People's City Mission	Help Center Forklift Upgrade	1	\$ 65,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 65,000	\$ -
26.83	26-119	Lower Platte North NRD	Source Water Monitoring Project	3	\$ 99,484	\$ 106,600	\$ 62,159	\$ 268,243	\$ -
26.5	26-155	Lincoln/Lancaster County Habitat for Humanity, inc	Lincoln Habitat Building Materials Reclamation Project	3	\$ 112,000	\$ 69,500	\$ 68,500	\$ 250,000	\$ -
25.17	26-103	Grand Island Area Clean Community System	Operation of Regional Household Hazardous Waste Facility	2	\$ 178,020	\$ 182,458	\$ -	\$ 360,478	\$ -
25	26-159	Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department	Increasing Awareness and Testing around Private Well Water Quality and Mitigating Health Risks From Water Contaminants	3	\$ 23,300	\$ 21,900	\$ 21,900	\$ 67,100	\$ -
24.67	26-152	Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition	Nebraska Grazing Lands enhancing advocacy for rangelands and tribal lands in Nebraska	1	\$ 43,830	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 43,830	\$ -
21.83	26-111	Aster Scatter	2025 Client Services	1	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ -
19.67	26-118	FarWide Conservation Trust, Inc.	Mill Pond Restoration Feasibility Study	1	\$ 29,800	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 29,800	\$ -
19.17	26-144	FarWide Conservation Trust, Inc.	City of Imperial Stormwater Feasibility Study	1	\$ 34,800	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 34,800	\$ -
							Totals	\$ 23,056,099	\$ 18,376,820

Report on 5 Year Funding Category Review

Item #: 6

Object: Review Final Report on 5 Year Funding Category Reviews

Contact Person: Holly Adams

For: DISCUSSION

Attachment: 32 pages

BACKGROUND

Neb. Rev. Stat. 81-15,176 Environmental categories of projects; board; establish grant criteria.

(1) ...The board shall establish environmental categories of projects eligible for funding by the trust. The board, after allowing opportunity for public comments, shall designate as categories those environmental goals which most affect the natural physical and biological environment in Nebraska, including the air, land, ground water and surface water, flora and fauna, prairies and forests, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and areas of aesthetic or scenic values. In designating environmental categories, the board shall attempt to focus on the areas which promise the greatest opportunities for effective action to achieve and preserve the future environmental quality in the state. The board shall establish categories for five-year periods beginning July 1, 1995. The board may establish annual priorities within the five-year categories. The board shall provide for public involvement in developing the categories for such five-year periods and any priorities within these categories, including, but not limited to, public meetings in each of the three congressional districts.

Title 137 – NET Rules & Regulations - Chapter 4 – Criteria for Eligibility

01. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS. 001.03. The grants should assist those projects which will make a real contribution to achieving the board's environmental categories. A real contribution is one that is measurable.

004. CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVE THE BOARD'S FUNDING CATEGORIES. Only those projects which contribute to the existing environmental categories established pursuant to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Act shall be eligible for financial assistance.

EXPLANATION

NET contracted with UNL Public Policy Center to receive public comment on the current funding categories. There were three in-person public meetings and one online meeting. These meetings were advertised in local newspapers and on social media.

- Nov. 18, 2025 - Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, 11700 SW 100 St. Denton, NE 68339.
- Nov. 19, 2025 - Clint Johannes Education Building at Lake Wanhoo, 1655 County Road 16, Wahoo, NE 68066.
- Nov. 20, 2025 - Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce, 220 11th Ave., Kearney, NE 68848.
- Dec. 2, 2025 - Zoom

The UNL Public Policy center has taken the comments made at these meetings and developed a report for the NET Board.

PROPOSAL

Discuss any possible updates to the current funding categories.

Attachments:

- Pages 6-1 through 6-3: Previous funding categories, with their descriptions, and updates
- Pages 6-4 through 6-32: UNL Public Policy Report

NET Funding Category Changes from 1992-2025

1992-1999

	Category	Category Description
1	Critical habitat areas	including wetlands acquisition, preservation, and restoration and acquisition and easements of areas critical to rare or endangered species
2	Surface water quality	including actions to preserve lakes and streams from degradation
3	Ground water quality	including fostering “best management” practices as defined in section 46-657, actions to preserve ground water from degradation, and remediation of soils or ground water
4	Recycling	Development of recycling markets and reduction of solid waste volume and toxicity

2000-2005

	Category	Category Description
1	Habitat	Acquisition, preservation and restoration of wetlands, native habitats and areas critical to at-risk, rare or endangered species; other preservation activities for at-risk, rare or endangered species including activities to understand ecosystem relationships which inform sound management; community habitat enhancement emphasizing native and ecologically appropriate plantings which provide food and shelter for wildlife; activities to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this priority.
2	Surface and Ground Water	Actions to preserve lakes, streams and ground water from degradation; actions to restore lakes and streams from degradation or to inform sound restoration activities; actions to foster best management practices as defined in section 46-657 or to inform sound management of hydrologically connected sources; activities to conserve water and/or efficiently and effectively manage water use; activities to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this priority.
3	Waste Reduction	Activities promoting and implementing source reduction; activities promoting and implementing the development of local to national recycling markets which benefit Nebraskans; activities promoting and implementing reuse and other disposal diversion activities; activities to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this priority.
4	Air Quality	Actions promoting and implementing clean air strategies; actions to research, design or foster best management strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
5	Carbon Management	Activities promoting and implementing the development of local to national carbon management strategies which benefit Nebraskans; activities to inform the implementation and management of these strategies; activities to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this priority.

NET Funding Category Changes from 1992-2025

2006-2010

	Category	Category Description
1	Habitat	Actions to preserve or restore native habitats and areas critical to at-risk, rare or endangered species; other preservation actions for at-risk, rare or endangered species including actions to understand ecosystem relationships which inform sound management; community habitat enhancement emphasizing native and ecologically appropriate plantings which provide food and shelter for wildlife; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
2	Surface and Ground Water	Actions to preserve or restore lakes, streams and ground water from degradation or depletion; actions to research, design or foster best management practices; actions to conserve water and/or efficiently and effectively manage water use; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
3	Waste Management	Actions promoting and implementing source reduction, waste management or toxicity reduction; actions promoting and implementing the development of recycling markets; actions promoting and implementing reuse and other disposal diversion actions; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
4	Air Quality	Actions promoting and implementing clean air strategies; actions to research, design or foster best management strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
5	Soil Management	Actions and strategies to preserve, conserve and restore soil health; actions to research, design or foster the implementation and management of these strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

NET Funding Category Changes from 1992-2025

2011-2015

	Category	Category Description
1	Habitat	Actions to preserve or restore native habitats and areas critical to at-risk, rare or endangered species; other preservation actions for at-risk, rare or endangered species including actions to understand ecosystem relationships which inform sound management; community habitat enhancement emphasizing native and ecologically appropriate plantings which provide food and shelter for wildlife; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category
2	Surface and Ground Water	Actions to preserve or restore lakes, waterways and ground water from degradation or depletion; actions to research, design or foster best management practices; actions to conserve water and/or efficiently and effectively manage water use; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
3	Waste Management	Actions promoting and implementing source reduction, waste management or toxicity reduction; actions promoting and implementing the development of recycling markets; actions promoting and implementing reuse and other disposal diversion actions; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
4	Air Quality	Actions promoting and implementing clean air strategies; including greenhouse gas reductions, actions to research, design or foster best management strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
5	Soil Management	Actions and strategies to preserve, conserve and restore soil health; actions to research, design or foster the implementation and management of these strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

2016-2020 No Change

2021-2025 No Change

Nebraska Environmental Trust Funding Category Review 2025 Report

December 18, 2025

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Executive Summary

Background & Methods

The Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET, the Trust) contracted with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (NUPPC) to facilitate public input on its five funding categories as part of its statutory obligation to review them every five years. Four public input sessions were held in the fall of 2025, three in-person meetings across Nebraska's three congressional districts and one virtual session. Fifty-one members of the public attended, representing a conservation organizations, advocacy groups, state agencies, landowners, and concerned citizens. A short presentation previewed the current state of the NET and provided prompts that served as testimony talking points. Participants provided testimony on which funding categories should remain, which should be changed, what new categories should be considered, and other opportunities for the Trust. The NUPPC transcribed and analyzed participants' testimony to identify emergent themes, which are summarized in this report.

Key Findings

Strong Support for Current Categories

Participants supported maintaining all five current funding categories (Habitat, Surface and Ground Water, Waste Management, Air Quality, and Soil Management). No participants advocated removing any category. The categories were praised as comprehensive, reflective of Nebraska's environment, and broad enough to give the Trust the opportunity to maintain focus on environmental priorities.

Priority Area Emphasis

Participants identified key topics that should be emphasized within the existing categories including environmental education and outreach, climate resilience and adaptation, invasive species management, recycling, sustainability, carbon sequestration, and green infrastructure. Many people suggested that these additional priorities would make NET funding more accessible to prospective applicants.

Potential New Categories

Four potential new categories emerged from the testimonies:

- Education and Awareness - Elevate environmental education to attract schools and underscore the importance of environmental awareness.
- Climate Resilience and Adaptation – Provide clarity for climate projects and align with state climate planning efforts.
- Small Grants – Support for projects under \$30,000 with simplified applications for schools and small communities.
- Planning Grants – Assist those applicants with limited capacity in project development, leading to larger applications.

However, not all participants supported adding new categories. Most of this reasoning centered on the idea that adding new categories could cause confusion for applicants when deciding which category their project fits under. A couple of participants mentioned already struggling with this decision because of the overlap and interconnectedness between current categories. Some participants also expressed concern that adding categories could over-broaden the pool of projects the Trust funds, such that projects no longer relate to environmental issues.

Conclusion

There is strong public support for NET's five current funding categories, as well as the emphasis on education and climate resilience across categories. Participants agreed that these topics are critical to NET's mission and Nebraska's environmental future.

Background

The Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET, the Trust) is charged with conserving, enhancing, and restoring the natural environments of Nebraska. To this end, the Trust administers a competitive grants program to fund natural resource projects in areas like habitat and air quality. The Trust has awarded over \$466 million in grant dollars to date for projects across all Nebraska counties.

To fulfill its statutory obligation to review grant funding categories every five years and to ensure its funded projects reflect the public’s vision of Nebraska’s environmental future, the Trust contracted with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (NUPPC) to facilitate input from the public on these categories. The current five funding categories are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. NET Funding Categories

Category	Definition
Habitat	Actions to preserve or restore native habitats and areas critical to at-risk, rare or endangered species; other preservation actions for at-risk, rare or endangered species including actions to understand ecosystem relationships which inform sound management; community habitat enhancement emphasizing native and ecologically appropriate plantings which provide food and shelter for wildlife; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
Surface and Ground Water	Actions to preserve or restore lakes, waterways, and groundwater from degradation or depletion; actions to research, design, or foster best management practices; actions to conserve water and/or efficiently and effectively manage water use; actions to inform and educate, which contribute to the attainment of this category.
Waste Management	Actions promoting and implementing source reduction, waste management, or toxicity reduction; actions promoting and implementing the development of recycling markets; actions promoting and implementing reuse and other disposal diversion actions; actions to inform and educate, which contribute to the attainment of this category.
Air Quality	Actions promoting and implementing clean air strategies, including greenhouse gas reductions; actions to research, design, or foster best management strategies; actions to inform and educate, which contribute to the attainment of this category.
Soil Management	Actions and strategies to preserve, conserve, and restore soil health; actions to research, design, or foster the implementation and management of these strategies; actions to inform and educate, which contribute to the attainment of this category.

Methods

The NUPPC facilitated four public input sessions in the fall of 2025. Three sessions were held in person, one within each of the state’s three congressional districts. The fourth session was held virtually over Zoom to accommodate stakeholders unable to provide feedback in person. The NUPPC helped recruit participants for input sessions by disseminating meeting information in local newspapers and on social media.¹ The map in Figure 1 shows the meeting locations and home counties for the virtual participants.²

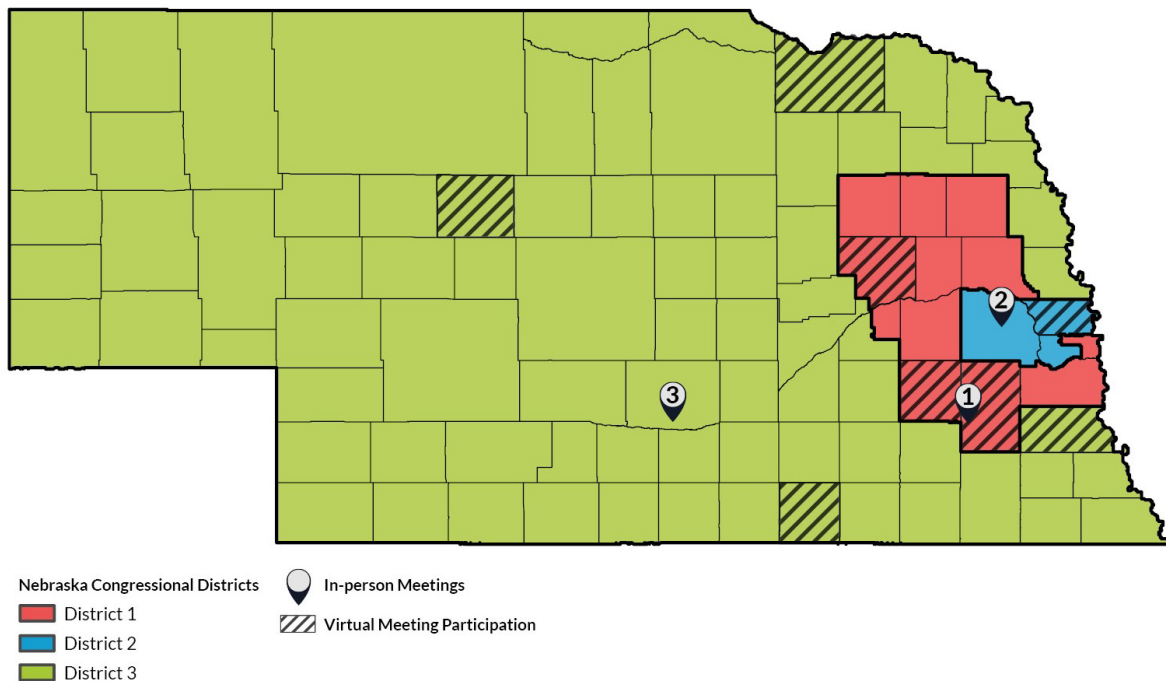


Figure 1. Public Input Meeting Participation Map

Stakeholders were also able to submit comments in written form through an online form or by mail to the Trust. A copy of the online comment form is available in the Appendix.

Each public input session consisted of an introductory presentation by the NUPPC to provide background information on NET and its funding categories.³ Following this introduction, stakeholders were allowed to ask follow-up questions to NET staff about its overall mission, history, or funding process. After this Q&A, stakeholders were given around 2-4 minutes to provide

¹ Details on the newspapers and social media platforms used to advertise the public input sessions are included in the Public Notices section of the Appendix.

² Virtual participants who provided their location/address during registration included the following counties: Lancaster, Douglas, Otoe, Knox, Nuckolls, Platte, Seward, and Thomas. One virtual participant had an out-of-state address.

³ Slides from the presentation are included in the Appendix

testimony on the funding categories. Testimonies were focused on the following questions, which provide the structure of this report:

- Which funding categories should remain the same for the next five years?
- Which, if any, category should be changed?
- What additional funding categories should be considered, and why?
- What other comments, ideas, or opportunities would you like the Nebraska Environmental Trust to know about?

A total of 51 members of the public attended the input sessions. Twenty-six of these 51 attended the virtual meeting.⁴ Each session included a diversity of perspectives and organizations, including Natural Resources Districts (NRDs), conservation organizations, advocacy organizations, and landowners. Members of the NET staff and Trust Board attended each session to observe and answer any questions about the Trust and were not included in the total number of participants. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and was recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Summary of Aggregate Themes

The NUPPC qualitatively analyzed participant testimony on the funding categories. The NUPPC employed an inductive analytical approach that identifies similarities, patterns, and connections in participants' feedback and allows for aggregate themes to emerge. This report summarizes these aggregate themes across the four input sessions, structured around each of the four questions guiding public testimony. The report includes verbatim quotes from participants to illustrate key ideas.

Which funding categories should remain the same for the next five years?

Strong Support for Maintaining Current Categories

Participants encouraged the Trust to maintain the current five funding categories. Most participants agreed that the five categories are comprehensive and sufficiently reflective of Nebraska's natural environment, with multiple participants citing the broadness of the categories as a distinct strength. These participants noted that the categories were broad enough to give the Trust discretion to fund a variety of environmental projects. In the words of a participant at the virtual session:

⁴ A breakdown of participants by each session is included in the Appendix.

I think they're [current funding categories] broad enough, but not so broad that things get lost.

Participants discussed how the current funding categories accurately encompass the work that they were involved with, particularly as they pertain to environmental/conservationist operations. Expressing their support for the current categories, one participant of the Denton public input session noted:

[The existing funding categories] provide a strong foundation for conservation and sustainability efforts. We support maintaining these categories and their emphasis on restoration, preservation, and education.

No participants advocated for the removal of any current category. However, many participants suggested that certain topics should be strongly emphasized in how NET defines the categories. Topics like environmental education/outreach and climate change, and resilience were the primary points of emphasis. There was widespread agreement that the funding categories, as currently defined, incorporate education and climate-related topics to some extent, even if some preferred to make these topics more explicit.

Which, if any, category should be changed?

Participants provided suggestions for points of emphasis within the existing funding categories. These emphases would not supplant the existing categories but would align funding priorities within them.

Education and Climate Emphasis

Participants often mentioned education and climate-related topics like climate resilience and adaptation as topics warranting additional emphasis. One participant suggested that the Trust more clearly delineate how education operates within each of the categories. Adding or refining these topics would institutionalize the importance of uses like education and climate in funding efforts and could make efforts to propose these projects more accessible for grantees by explicitly calling them out. One participant explained that if the Trust added a tourism component or broadened education to include environmental tourism, small rural communities could find NET funding more accessible. This participant suggested that emphasizing an environmental tourism component could provide traditionally resource-constrained communities with new avenues to enhance their natural habitats.

Emerging Topics in Specific Categories

Apart from education and climate, many other topics of emphasis within existing categories were discussed. One participant in the virtual session supported the five current categories but believed that recycling should be a point of emphasis going forward. Another participant observed that sustainability could be explicitly called out in each category. In each in-person meeting,

participants raised the issue of invasive species and invasive species management as important priority areas within the habitat and water categories. One participant suggested that invasive species management projects are already adequately covered under the categories as currently defined, but another suggested that the Trust make invasive species management more explicit in its relevant definitions.

Carbon capture and carbon sequestration were mentioned as projects the Trust should prioritize within the air quality category. Soil management was another category mentioned as needing expansion, with one participant speaking on the prospects of precision agriculture technology for such projects. Participants also suggested that green infrastructure projects could be emphasized within the water category, with others noting that funding nature-based green infrastructure projects could have beneficial effects on community engagement. These comments resonate with the importance of innovative, community-based solutions to environmental challenges. In this vein, one participant suggested the Trust increase its focus on projects that incorporate local ecological knowledge, which they noted could lead to opportunities for collaboration with indigenous communities.

What additional funding categories should be considered, and why?

Participants identified additional areas deserving of their own category. The most common categories suggested were education and climate change, with others including a suggested “minor projects” funding area and a planning category. Participants advocating for additions were not opposed to maintaining the current five categories. Rather, new categories would be featured *in addition to* the current categories rather than *instead of* them.

Education, Outreach, and Awareness

Education, outreach, and awareness of environmental issues were strong undercurrents across sessions and written comments. Though many participants supported the integration of education in the current categories, some encouraged the Trust to elevate it to its own category. Reasons for adding an education category include the importance of environmental education across all funding categories and calling attention to the role that an environmentally aware and educated public serves in fulfilling the Trust’s mandate. Participants advocating for a separate funding category for education contend that the new category could be a way to increase awareness of NET funding for those with eligible programs, but historically have not viewed the Trust as a funder. One participant suggested the re-establishment of the Public Information and Education (PIE) Grants program. Another online commenter explained:

Education should be its own category to stand out to potential funding recipients who are doing Environmental Education work, but may not see the potential for NET support in existing category titles.

Multiple participants, predominantly from the virtual input session and online comments, touched on the role of environmental education for youth and schools. These participants suggested that promoting a new education category to schools and/or native communities could spur applications from education systems or community organizations that teach young people about sustainable practices. One participant, for instance, noted that schools already offering sustainability programs and activities⁵ could be encouraged to continue or expand their activities should education be given equal status as a category. Another online commenter offered a similar note:

The conservation mindset we create in our NE schools today will spread throughout the community now and as the children grow up.

A couple of individuals expressed concern about the unintended consequences of adding an education category. These participants wondered the extent to which a new education category could risk NET grant funds being diverted to other state education commitments. Others warned that a separate education category might attract grants that do not reflect the environmental priorities of the Trust.

Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Reasons for adding a climate category include that it would add clarity to applicants interested in climate projects and would stimulate creative solutions to modern climate challenges. A participant noted that adding a climate category would be consistent with the state's climate action plan, whereas multiple participants of the virtual sessions referenced the state's climate office and its reports as support for adding a climate category. Participants of the virtual session strongly pushed for a new climate funding category and for the NET board to take climate change seriously. Participants discussed the severity of climate-related impacts on things like weather, species, and agriculture.

There's been a tremendous amount of deterioration of the climate and changes, so I would urge the change to add climate change as a category, a separate category.

Another participant added that including a climate category could provide a new avenue for funding climate-related projects, given recent drawbacks in federally funded climate projects. When discussing the merits of a climate category, this participant offered a definition for a new climate category called Climate Resilience and Adaptation:

Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance carbon sequestration, and improve resilience to climate-related impacts such as drought, flooding, and extreme weather.

⁵ This participant referenced a list of schools/activities compiled at <https://www.sierraclub.org/nebraska/ne-sustainability-schools>

Two participants of the virtual session specifically mentioned climate adaptation and resilience when suggesting new categories, indicating the significance of the adaptation and resilience components of climate change.

Regardless of whether they favored or opposed adding education and/or climate categories, participants agreed it should be incorporated in the funding categories. Many agreed that the categories, as currently defined, adequately reflected education and climate and appreciated the extent to which the Trust embedded them in the categories. To this end, participants agreed that education and climate should be emphasized in the funding categories – just not to the extent of giving them their own category. Most of the participants who advocated additional climate or education categories indicated that emphasizing/embedding education and climate in the current categories could be a sufficient alternative to making them discrete categories.

Mini-Projects Grants

Participants in the virtual session and a couple of online commenters suggested that NET add a funding category for “mini” projects that are smaller in scope, scale, and amount requested. This idea emerged from participants’ discussion of challenges experienced in funding a series of projects that are smaller in scope relative to projects traditionally funded by NET. Some of the options for structuring these smaller projects included making it a separate funding category, reserving a certain amount of funding each grant cycle for projects under a certain dollar amount (\$30,000 per project was suggested), or creating a simplified application process for small requests. One participant explained how this new category could be used:

I would include a section for mini-grants that may span multiple funding categories or have a small scope. Examples would be grants for teachers and classroom projects, grants for schools/businesses to do things like composting or recycling, etc.

Another participant added that the small grant projects could be used by schools to enhance existing projects related to composting, recycling, gardens, and aquaponics. They noted that these projects would be educational and would fit within the existing funding, addressing the concerns of a participant who expressed fears that funders are hesitant to support small projects.

Planning

A final category addition supported by some participants of the virtual session was project planning. Proponents suggested that many prospective applicants might be unfamiliar with the process of an NET project. Applicants, particularly those from smaller communities, may lack the technical or administrative capacity to go through the process of applying for NET funding and managing the project if awarded. A planning category (or a structured pre-implementation process for awardees within the existing categories) could be beneficial in guiding applicants as they obtain funds and implement projects to maximize impacts. Comments from the virtual

meeting and online highlighted examples of how planning funds could be used, including creating project work plans and hiring consultants to evaluate projects a community could pursue.

In the virtual meeting, a participant suggested that the Trust allow communities to solicit funds for evaluating future environmental/climate risks in their community. A community could, for instance, request funding for studying local climate risks and mitigation strategies, for which they could then seek additional funding. This suggestion closely relates to the planning topic, as well as to other participants' calls for innovative solutions to environmental challenges.

New Category Opposition

Some participants were opposed to adding any new categories. These participants reasoned that adding categories could over-broaden the pool of projects the Trust funds, such that projects no longer relate to environmental issues. A couple of participants mentioned struggling with deciding which funding category their project fits best in because of the overlap and interconnectedness between categories. Some said adding more categories could confuse applicants when deciding which category their project fits under.

What other comments, ideas, or opportunities would you like the Nebraska Environmental Trust to know about?

Projects Supported by the NET

A key aspect of the funding input sessions was to allow participants to bring other comments, ideas, or opportunities to the Trust's attention. One theme from these comments was input on what the NET should or should not fund, regardless of funding category. This commentary reinforced the necessity for the NET to invest in innovative, community-centered projects. A participant encouraged NET to look at funding projects like those awarded by the Omaha Public Power District program, Greener Together.⁶ This program funds green community-focused projects that are consistent with NET categories, yet it only has around \$200,000 in funding available per year, which could limit its positive environmental and community impacts. Participants in the virtual meeting added that NET should fund projects that are consistent with city climate action plans (i.e., Omaha and Lincoln) as well as the state plan, regardless of category. Another participant stated that they would not want the Trust to fund projects supporting carbon pipelines.

The topic of conservation easements was raised in two in-person meetings. Some spoke favorably about the practice of public/NET funds being used to support conservation easements. Participants of this disposition suggested the Trust look more closely at funding these efforts, albeit with scrutiny, discretion, and use of matching funds. These participants believed that conservation easements have received less support in recent years due to political and social

⁶ More information on this program can be found at <https://www.oppd.com/residential/products-services/go-green/greener-together-program/>

pressures. A participant from a different meeting advocated strongly against the use of NET funds for easements because they argued they tie the hands of future generations of landowners by conserving land in perpetuity.

NET Funding Process

The theme of how NET evaluates and awards funding emerged in public comments and questions to NET staff. Many participants inquired about different aspects of the NET funding process during the public input sessions, including grant evaluation criteria and how project impacts are measured. Topics discussed in this line of inquiry included why NET doesn't typically distribute all available project funds each year, the extent to which NET assists applicants throughout the proposal process, and specific elements of the Trust's funding criteria.

Questions or comments related to NET's criteria for awarding funds were consistent across each in-person and virtual meeting. Participants asked about how the Trust evaluates or prioritizes proposals for items like climate justice/equity, climate adaptation, and geography. Following up on the topic of climate justice/equity and climate adaptation, a participant provided example project ideas like levee setbacks, green infrastructure, and projects aiming to mitigate extreme weather events like storms, floods, and droughts. This participant also advocated for the Trust to consider climate justice and equity in its evaluation criteria.

A virtual meeting participant elaborated on the topic of geographic criteria and encouraged the Trust to incorporate geographic weighting in its funding decisions. Distributing funds more evenly by region, county, or congressional district was suggested. Additionally, they suggested the Trust weight categories differently to even out the distribution of awarded projects. As they noted:

The categories that are funded are not equal by any means, but I think there needs to be a weighting distribution to help better address the other categories, rather than just two that are primarily funded.

This participant emphasized that while all categories are critical to address, the Trust will end up funding the same applicants in the same categories if it does not balance the funding distribution. This participant encouraged the Trust to revisit their policies on cash match. They contended that the uneven geographic distribution of funds is evidence of this need to re-evaluate NET's acceptance of only hard cash match.

Another topic of discussion related to the funding process is the measurement of project impacts. Some participants were curious about the extent to which the Trust evaluated the impacts of projects at the category level and whether that affected which categories/projects it prioritizes when awarding projects. Participants also identified a potential challenge in measuring the impacts of projects related to education because metrics of success are harder to identify. Relative to projects in areas like habitat and waste management, where metrics may be more readily quantified, education projects could have more long-term effects that are difficult to

quantify in the near term. These hard-to-define measures of success and return on investment were important to recognize, participants noted, due to their possible effects on funding decisions.

A final topic under the theme of NET's funding processes relates to the application process. A couple of participants encouraged NET to clarify and simplify the application process to make it more accessible for new applicants. In an online comment, a participant noted that it could be beneficial to adjust the application process in accordance with the timeline and scale of the proposed project. Making the application and implementation process proportional to the type of project considered could perhaps make the application and implementation process more accessible for applicants seeking short-term or small-scale projects.

Administrative Comments

A final theme of the public's comments on non-funding category matters is participants' input on administrative issues. This includes comments on barriers experienced by grantees to administer projects and concerns related to the Trust's administration. As it pertains to the former, one participant stated that the Trust's \$10,000 cap on administrative expenditure poses challenges for larger projects. They encouraged the Trust to increase or be more flexible with this cap, particularly for projects featuring work with private landowners. A second participant reiterated concerns over administrative barriers in this written comment:

Outside of funding categories, we believe it is critical to address the relatively new administrative barriers created within the Nebraska Environmental Trust to ensure the program remains accessible and efficient for applicants, while still upholding the statutory goals.

Raising a similar point, one participant from the virtual session suggested that NET's rules and regulations deter applications. They argued that the rules and regulations are "almost impossible to comply with" unless applicants are large organizations with professional grant writers at their disposal. These observations relate to others' comments on the need for ease of application and access to NET funds for less-resourced applicants. Further, they resonate with comments on factors inhibiting applications. As one participant explained, the NET's recent trend of not awarding most of its available funds per year could discourage applicants who may not believe they have a chance of being awarded.

A final strand of comments relating to general administrative issues was about the Trust's adherence to its original intent. Comments of this nature focused on the Trust's independence from other state agencies that use NET funding to supplement their budgets instead of serving the environmental needs of communities. One participant explained:

Agencies have, for the last few years, decided just to come in and take a scoop. No partnership, no nothing, and it doesn't really serve the communities and the little guys it was

intended to. It's just become another stream of money to supplement budgets in hard times. That was not the intent.

Stressing a similar point, another participant encouraged NET board members to actively defend the Trust from attempts to backfill other agency budgets. Central to these comments is the desire to see NET funding be used to support communities in need. While most participants across sessions stressed that the Trust is an essential resource for addressing environmental needs in Nebraska, there is a clear desire for it to maintain its independence and commitment to its mission.

Conclusion

The Nebraska Environmental Trust and its current five funding categories have broad support from the Nebraska public. However, many participants articulated priority areas for NET's consideration. Each session heavily emphasized the salience of environmental education and adaptation and resilience to climate change, with some suggesting them as funding categories. Rationales for adding education and climate categories included signaling the importance of these issues in addressing environmental needs and making it more accessible for prospective applicants interested in such projects.

Opponents to adding education and/or climate funding categories were not opposed to the underlying motivations for such categories, rather were opposed to the functionality of adding them as categories. Some mentioned the possibility of adding categories as confusing and could invite proposals for projects that are not environmentally focused. Concerns over NET funding being diverted for other educational programs were also mentioned, echoing the concerns of other participants who spoke out against Trust funds being used to address other state agency commitments.

There was a consensus that education and climate should be emphasized in NET funding efforts. Other topics of emphasis mentioned included invasive species management, recycling, and general projects that are innovative and community-centric. Other categories that could be added include one for planning and one for small projects, each of which addresses the core theme of making NET grants clear and accessible for all applicants.

Accessibility of funding for applicants across the state, regardless of geography or timing/scale of projects, emerged as an important consideration for the Trust. Participants were widely appreciative of the Trust's funding efforts and desired for funding to be attainable in smaller, underserved communities. To this end, participants reiterated the importance of a clear application process, non-limiting rules and regulations, and the Trust maintaining its independence and mission.

Appendix

Attendance at Public Input Session

Three public input sessions were held in person in each of the state's three congressional districts, as well as one virtual session. The locations of each in-person meeting and attendance numbers are included below. Members of NET and NUPPC staff are not included unless otherwise specified.

District 1: Denton, NE

The session in District 1 was held on November 18, 2025, at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center in Denton, Nebraska. Ten members of the public attended this meeting.

District 2: Wahoo, NE

The session in District 2 was held on November 19, 2025, in Wahoo, Nebraska, at the Clint Johannes Education Building at Lake Wahoo. Five members of the public attended this meeting.

District 3: Kearney, NE

The input session in District 3 was held on November 20, 2025, at the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce in Kearney, Nebraska. Ten members of the public attended this meeting. Two members of the NET Board also attended.

Virtual

The virtual input session was held on December 2. Out of fifty-four total registrants, 26 members of the public attended.

Public Notices

The NUPPC advertised public input sessions through newspapers in each district and social media. Meeting information for each in-person meeting and a link to register for the virtual meeting was featured on the NUPPC's events page, as well as disseminated through Twitter/X, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

District 1

The *Lincoln Journal Star* placed a notice in its publication on three days to publicize the funding category meetings, including the dates and locations for each meeting site and link to register for the virtual meeting. The *Lincoln Journal Star* ran the notice three times, on November 9, 12, and 18.

District 2

The *Omaha World Herald* placed a notice in its publication on three days to publicize the funding category meetings, including the dates and locations for each meeting site and link to register for the virtual meeting. *Omaha World Herald* ran the notice three times, on November 9, 12, and 16.

District 3

The *Kearney Hub* placed a notice in its publication over three days to publicize the funding category meetings, including the dates and locations for each meeting site and link to register for the virtual meeting. The *Hub* ran the notice three times, on November 13, 15, and 18.

Online Feedback Form

Participants were provided access to an online survey form to provide comments in written form. A copy of the survey is available below.

Thank you for attending a Nebraska Environmental Trust funding review meeting! We would like your input on the Trust's funding categories and your opinion on other potential funding categories.

The deadline for comments is December 3, 2025.

The current five funding categories are:

Habitat: Actions to preserve or restore native habitats and areas critical to at-risk, rare or endangered species; other preservation actions for at-risk, rare or endangered species including actions to understand ecosystem relationships which inform sound management; community habitat enhancement emphasizing native and ecologically appropriate plantings which provide food and shelter for wildlife; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

Surface and Ground Water: Actions to preserve or restore lakes, waterways and ground water from degradation or depletion; actions to research, design or foster best management practices; actions to conserve water and/or efficiently and effectively manage water use; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

Waste Management: Actions promoting and implementing source reduction, waste management or toxicity reduction; actions promoting and implementing the development of recycling markets; actions promoting and implementing reuse and other disposal diversion actions; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

Air Quality: Actions promoting and implementing clean air strategies; including greenhouse gas reductions; actions to research, design or foster best management strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

Soil Management: Actions and strategies to preserve, conserve and restore soil health; actions to research, design or foster the implementation and management of these strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.

After reviewing the current five funding categories, please answer the following:

Which public session did you attend?

- District 1 (Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center) November 18, 2025
- District 2 (Clint Johannes Education Building at Lake Wanahoo) November 19, 2025
- District 3 (Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce) November 20, 2025
- Virtual Session December 2, 2025

Which funding categories should remain the same for the next five years?

Which funding category, if any, should be changed?

What additional funding categories should be considered, and why?

What other comments, ideas, or opportunities would you like the Nebraska Environmental Trust to know about?

Public Input Presentation

Nebraska Environmental Trust Funding Category Public Input


- + • November 18, Denton, NE
- • November 19, Wahoo, NE
- November 20, Kearney, NE
- December 2, Virtual (Zoom)



1

Today's Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
 - Note: This session is being recorded for note-taking purposes only
- Overview of the Nebraska Environmental Trust
- Public Testimony Ground Rules
- Input on Funding Categories
- Adjourn



2



About the Nebraska Environmental Trust

- Created by the Nebraska Unicameral in 1992 and ratified by a vote of the public
- Competitive grants program open to all Nebraskans for natural resource projects
- The Trust has awarded more than **\$466 million** in grant dollars



3



Mission Statement

The Nebraska Environmental Trust is established to conserve, enhance and restore the natural environments of Nebraska. A prosperous future requires a sound natural environment. We must act dynamically, progressively and systematically to ensure bountiful and thriving natural resources.

The Trust is to complement existing activities, stimulate private investment and emphasize long term gain. The Trust is to lead in the development of a vision of Nebraska's future environment. The Trust is to collaborate with public and private efforts to achieve that vision.



4

Trust Board and Agency Directors

Trust Board

- District 1:
 - Jeff Kanger
 - Ted Vasko
 - Jim Hellbusch
- District 2:
 - Garfield Coleman
 - Roger Helgoth
 - Mark Quandahl
- District 3:
 - Josh Anderson
 - Eric Hansen
 - Paul Christensen

Agency Directors:

- Tim McCoy, Nebraska Game and Parks
- Sherry Vinton, Nebraska Department of Agriculture
- Jesse Bradley, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment
- Matt Manning, Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment



5

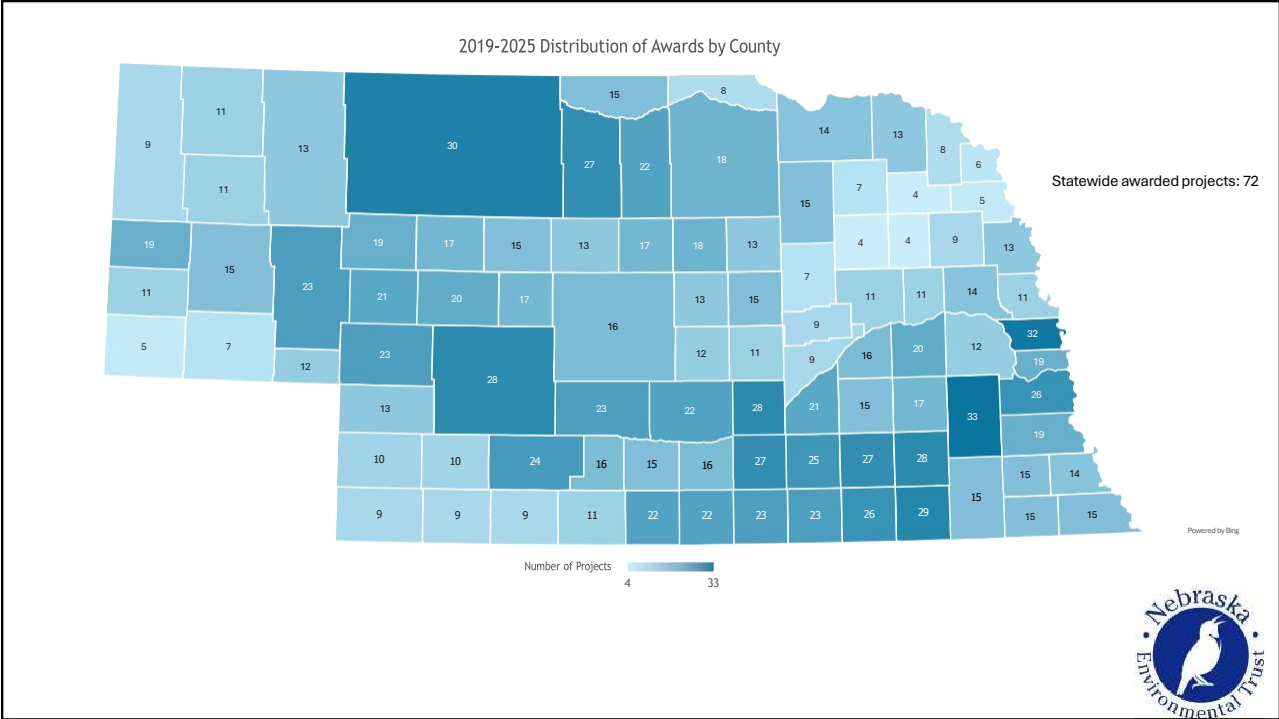
Funding Categories

The Trust sets funding category areas for five-year periods, in a process involving members of the Nebraska public. The Trust currently considers funding proposals in the following priority areas:

- **Habitat** - Actions to preserve or restore native habitats and areas critical to at-risk, rare or endangered species; other preservation actions for at-risk, rare or endangered species including actions to understand ecosystem relationships which inform sound management; community habitat enhancement emphasizing native and ecologically appropriate plantings which provide food and shelter for wildlife; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
- **Surface and Ground Water** - Actions to preserve or restore lakes, waterways and ground water from degradation or depletion; actions to research, design or foster best management practices; actions to conserve water and/or efficiently and effectively manage water use; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
- **Waste Management** - Actions promoting and implementing source reduction, waste management or toxicity reduction; actions promoting and implementing the development of recycling markets; actions promoting and implementing reuse and other disposal diversion actions; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
- **Air Quality** - Actions promoting and implementing clean air strategies; including greenhouse gas reductions; actions to research, design or foster best management strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.
- **Soil Management** - Actions and strategies to preserve, conserve and restore soil health; actions to research, design or foster the implementation and management of these strategies; actions to inform and educate which contribute to the attainment of this category.



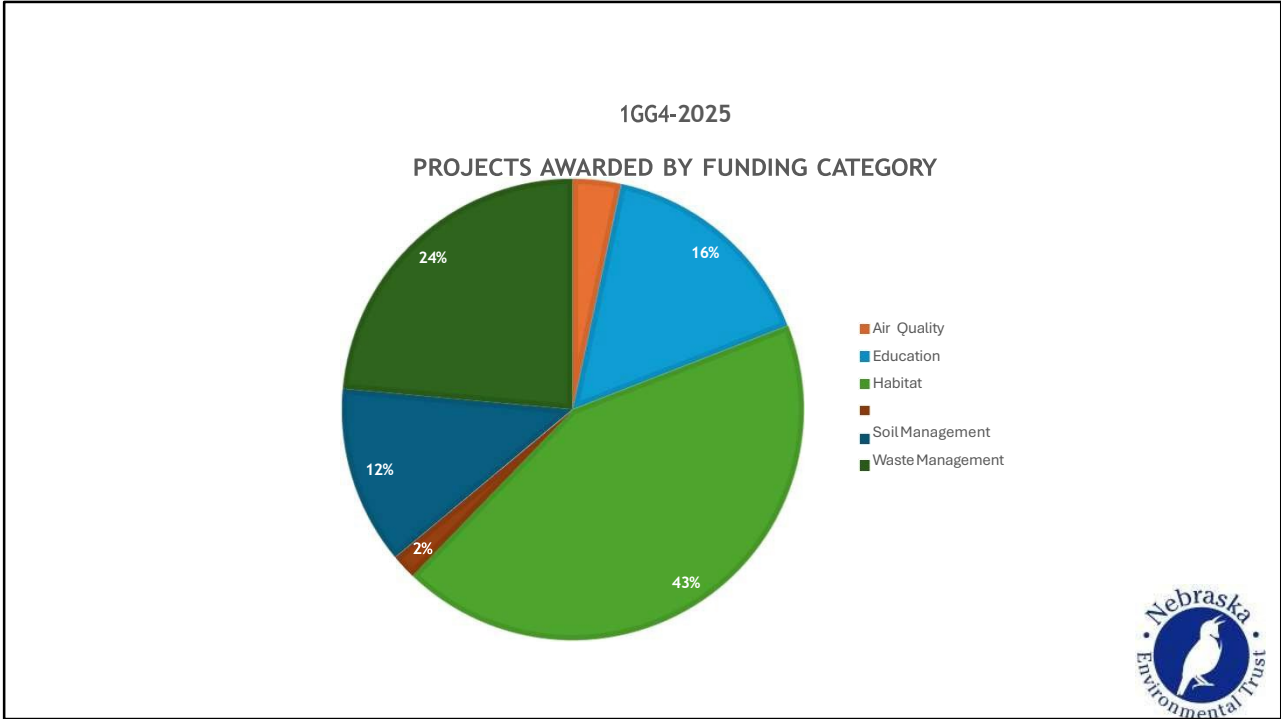
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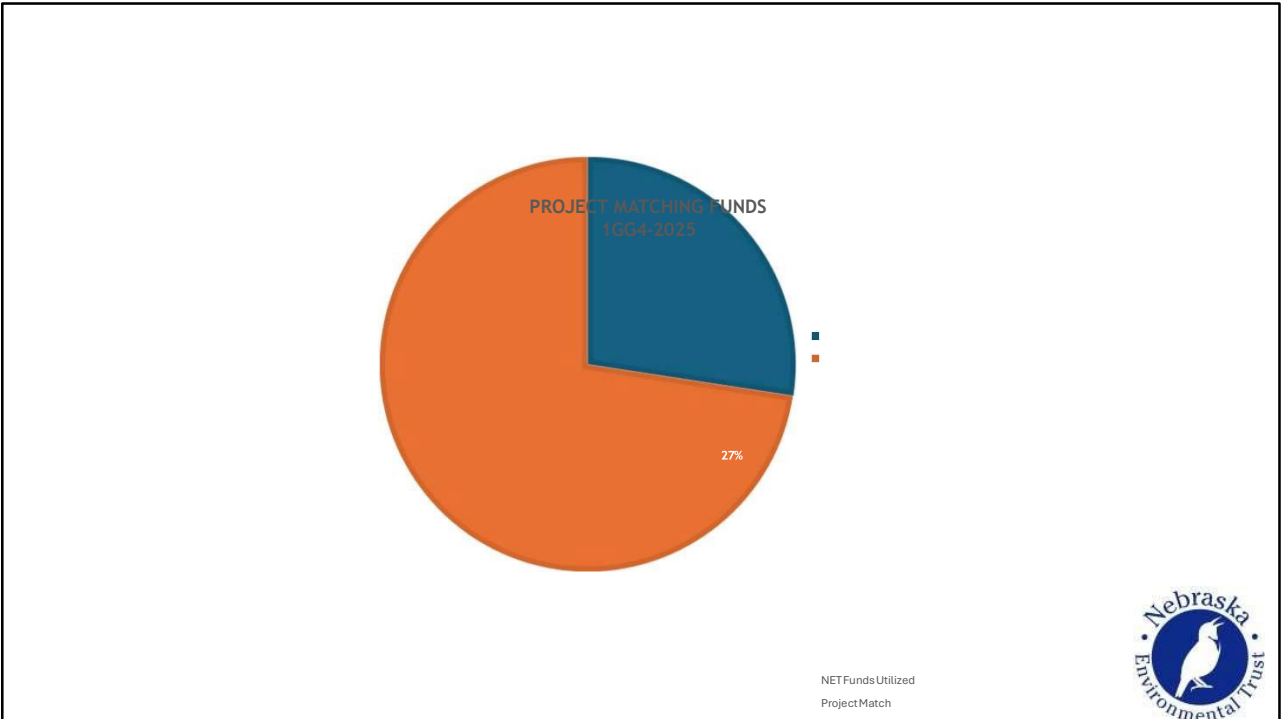
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9




10




Public Testimony Ground Rules

- Each speaker has 2-4 minutes to provide comments
- Please keep comments focused on the question of funding categories
- Be respectful of all participants and viewpoints-we welcome all perspectives and constructive input
- If you have written materials, you may submit them after the meeting
- You will have the option of submitting comments online




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Public Input on Funding Categories

After reviewing the current five funding categories (habitat, surface and ground water, waste management, air quality, and soil management), consider the following:

- Which funding categories should remain the same for the next five years?
- Which, if any category should be changed?
- What additional funding categories should be considered, and why?
- What other comments, ideas, or opportunities would you like the Nebraska Environmental Trust to know about?



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Additional Comments?

- Written Comments
 - Nebraska Environmental Trust, 2077 N Street, Suite 310, Lincoln, NE 68510 or env.trust@nebraska.gov
- Online Comments
 - <https://go.unl.edu/netrust>
- All comments must be received by 5:00 P.M. (CT) on **December 3, 2025**



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Thank you!

 ppc.nebraska.edu



@NU_PPC

Nebraska UNIVERSITY OF
PUBLIC POLICY
CENTER

14

Basic Grant Contract Updates

Item #: 7

Object: To review and approve

Contact Person: Holly Adams

For: ACTION

Attachment: 13 pages

BACKGROUND

The former NET Trust 22 Committee worked with the former Center for Operational Excellence staff to improve NET processes. One of the improvements was to update the contractual grant requirements. This is now part of an annual review process of the contract terms.

EXPLANATION

Nebraska Administrative Code, Title 137, Chapter 8 – Grant Administration

001 After the Board takes action to award grants to specific projects, the Executive Director shall begin notification procedures. The Executive Director shall also prepare grant documents for disbursement in accordance with this Chapter.

001.01 Grant documents shall include a notice of grant award, a disbursement schedule, standard conditions and any special conditions all of which will be included in a grant agreement to be signed by the grantee.

002 The Executive Director shall prepare standard conditions applicable to all grants and shall have discretion to negotiate specific conditions within the limits of the intent specified by the Board.

PROPOSAL

The updated grant contract is provided to the NET Board members. Small updates and the reason for the changes are listed on the contract.

Recommended motion "I move that the NET Board approves the standard conditions grant contract for grant awards and that the Executive Director shall have discretion to negotiate specific conditions as allowed in Title 137, Chapter 8."

NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST GRANT CONTRACT

**Between the
Nebraska Environmental Trust**

and

«Sponsor»

Regarding the implementation of a grant proposal

«Project_Name»

NET Reference Number: «App_ID»

THIS GRANT AGREEMENT is made and entered into by and between the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) and «Sponsor» (Sponsor) in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. Sec. 85-15,168 et. seq. the Nebraska Environmental Trust Act;

WHEREAS, the Sponsor applied to the NET for grant funds to facilitate completion of «Project_Name» («App_ID») (the Project), pursuant to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Act, and

WHEREAS, following evaluation of the application and any attachments, the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board approved a grant of up to «Grant Award» the Sponsor, subject to available funds and appropriations.

WHEREAS, the Sponsor agrees to comply with all provisions of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 85-15,168 et. seq., Nebraska Administrative Code Title 137, Rules and Regulations Governing Activities of the Nebraska Environmental Trust (Title 137), pertinent provisions of the Adopted Policies of the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the terms of this Agreement, and

WHEREAS, Sponsor intends to use the funds as set out in this Agreement;

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties do hereby agree to the terms and requirements of this Agreement as follows:

I. TERM OF THE AGREEMENT

This Agreement will begin on the date it is executed by NET and will remain in effect until all identified tasks are completed for this Project unless terminated under this Agreement, but will not remain in effect past «Project_End_Date» (Project End Date). The Grant Period shall be the time between the execution of this Agreement by the NET and the Project End Date. No funds will be released until the start of the Grant Period, and all prerequisites of the NET Letter of Approval have been satisfied. All required activities and services, except for submission of final reports, administration, and audit, must be completed by or before the Project End Date. The provisions of this Agreement that survive the Project End Date include items that have a greater longevity (i.e. depreciation of personal property, easements, final report).

No assignment or transfer of this Agreement or any part hereof, rights hereunder, or interest herein by the Sponsor shall be valid unless and until it is approved by the NET and made subject to reasonable terms and conditions as the NET may impose.

II. AMOUNT OF GRANT AND BUDGET OUTLINE

The Sponsor will be awarded up to «Grant Award» (Project Costs) to accomplish the Project.

1. BUDGET OUTLINE AND DISBURSEMENT SCHEDULE. The final budget outline and disbursement schedule, whether it was submitted with the application or revised at the request of the NET is made part of this Agreement. The Sponsor is required to stay within the submitted budget categories. Any changes to the limit of a budget category requires a contract amendment. NET will not reimburse Sponsor for any expenditures that occur prior to the Grant Period.

If the project was a multi-year application, the NET Board approved funds for additional years. Each year of funding is subject to the prior year's project performance and milestone completion. Rollover funds from one year to the next will be evaluated based on grant performance and are not guaranteed.

- a. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES. The NET limits the amount of General Administrative Expense for a grant. Costs that are administrative in nature ~~but and~~ are in direct support of a project activity should be charged to the project activity and not to General Administration. General Administration ~~costs-expenses~~ relate solely to administration of the grant and project file. General Administration Expenses shall ~~mean~~ refer to those expenses related to overall administration, including (but not limited to) salaries, wages, employer's share of social security and Medicare taxes, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and employer-provided health, dental, or vision insurance premiums of Sponsor staff or others engaged in grant management, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. General Administration Expenses shall not exceed 5% of Project Costs or \$10,000, whichever is less.

The following limits apply to reimbursements for General Administrative Expenses: wages, per employee, shall be limited to a 40-hour work week; the employer's share of Social Security taxes and Medicare taxes on wages shall be limited to 7.65% of gross wages; the employer's share of employer-provided health, dental, or vision insurance premiums, which shall not exceed the actual cost or up to \$5.00 per hour in total, whichever is less.

- b. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION.
 - 1) Personnel Expenses: submit a copy of the paycheck stub or payroll record showing hourly rate and hours and dates worked, ~~date and location~~. Submit a copy of Federal Form 941 if requesting reimbursement of the employer's share of Social Security and Medicare taxes or other proof of taxes paid.
 - 2) Supply and Operating Expenses: submit a ~~copy of the~~ detailed dated invoice or receipt.
 - 3) Travel Expenses: submit a copy of the detailed, itemized receipt for food, hotel, and public transportation expenses. Submit a log for mileage for reimbursement

of business miles with date, starting and ending location, miles traveled and purpose for the travel.

- 4) Contractual Expenses: submit a copy of the detailed invoice and image of the cancelled check or proof of payment acceptable to NET.
- 5) Personal Property Expenses: submit a copy of the detailed invoice (listing make, model, and serial number of item) and image of the cancelled check or proof of payment acceptable to NET.
- 6) Cash Match Expenses: submit a detailed list of expenses and calculations used for cash match.
- 7) Telephone Utility Expenses: submit a copy of the detailed bill; landline telephone, cell phone services, ~~and internet, and other utilities~~ are reimbursable only if the service contract is billed to the Sponsor.

Commented [HA1]: Clarification

2. MATCHING FUNDS. Matching funds, as identified in the application, shall be proportionally injected into the Project as NET funded activities are drawn down. Matching funds are cash match. The NET may waive this requirement for some or all of the Project upon a written request by the Sponsor.
3. NON-REIMBURSABLE PERSONNEL EXPENSES. The following personnel expenses will not be reimbursed with grant funds: actual wages ~~in excess of more than~~ a 40-hour work week; health, dental, and vision insurance costs over \$5.00 per hour, limited to a 40-hour work week.

Non-reimbursable personnel costs that cannot be used as match: life insurance costs; retirement account contributions; tuition or higher education paid as an employee benefit; a payout for unused sick or vacation leave; indirect costs as a percentage of gross wages; any bonuses.

If Sponsor uses indirect costs as a cash match to the grant, the NET will not reimburse costs for office rent, utilities, phone, internet, printing, etc.

- ~~4. IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS. Not allowed.~~

Commented [HA2]: Redundant, mentions cash match only under matching funds section.

- ~~5.4. FEDERAL RATE REIMBURSEMENT. Same-day meals and lodging expenses are not permitted for reimbursement. Travel must be at least two days (overnight) and the destination at least 60 miles from the workplace to be eligible for reimbursement. Reimbursement for meals and lodging for overnight travel will be reimbursed at the actual cost of said expenses except that this reimbursement shall be capped at the Federal rate per meal for food and per day for lodging. Alcohol reimbursement is prohibited.~~

~~Mileage may be reimbursed for both same-day and overnight travel at the current standard IRS mileage rate. Travel logs are required, which include the following information: starting point and destination, number of miles driven, and purpose of the trip.~~

Automobile rentals, airfares, and taxi/shuttle transportation will be reimbursed at the actual reasonable cost. A bank card receipt that displays only the total cost of the transportation expense is not sufficient documentation.

Commented [HA3]: This is already listed under the required documentation section

6.5. REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST FORMS. To request payment of allowable expenses, the Sponsor must submit a request for payment in the manner and form prescribed by the NET. Invoices over 180 days old at the time of the reimbursement request will not be allowed. ~~The NET may waive this requirement upon a written request by the Sponsor.~~ The Sponsor has 90 days from the Project End Date to submit a final reimbursement request with an invoice incurred before the Project End Date.

Commented [HA4]: Allows for some leniency in certain situations.

7.6. RETAINAGE. NET reserves the right to retain a portion of each requested reimbursement in an amount or percentage determined by NET.

8.7. UNAUTHORIZED EXPENSES. Sponsor will not be reimbursed for unauthorized expenditures, including, but not limited to, ~~late fees on invoices.~~
(a) ~~Recognition expenses such as prizes, plaques, awards, certificates, or trophies.~~
(b) ~~Late fees on invoices.~~
(c) ~~Promotional items of clothing and/or accessory items (ex: hats, t-shirts, jackets, etc.) will be eligible for reimbursement, provided the purchase is proposed in the original grant application and the purpose is clearly defined for public environmental benefit. Reimbursement for the purchase of any clothing and/or accessory items is limited to \$500 per grantee per grant year.~~

Commented [HA5]: This has to have already been in their application to be eligible for reimbursement.

III. WORK DESCRIPTION AND SCHEDULES

This Project shall complete objectives and work items as described in the Project application, which by this reference are made part of this Agreement.

IV. GENERAL CONDITIONS

- 1. REIMBURSEMENT ONLY.** NET operates using a reimbursement process only. Prospective payments, advances, or early payments are prohibited. Bills which would become due and owing after the term of this Agreement or payment for memberships, services, or contracts which extend beyond the term of this Agreement are prohibited. Any funds remaining at the Project End Date will be returned or retained by NET. Funds shall be disbursed to the grantee no more than once per month in accordance with the grant Agreement as per Title 137.
- 2. STATUTES AND REGULATIONS.** The Sponsor will comply with all local, state, and federal statutes, rules, regulations, ordinances, and orders applicable to Sponsor. Sponsor shall acquire, obtain, or receive all state and Federal licenses and/or permits required by law prior to initiation of the Project. Violation of this condition will be considered a breach of this Agreement and be subject to penalties or termination as set forth in this Agreement.
- 3. FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION.** If the Sponsor provides false or misleading information, or withholds material facts during the application, administration, or reporting process in any

way, it will be considered a breach of this Agreement, and be subject to penalties or termination as set forth in this Agreement.

4. **COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL REQUIREMENTS.** Sponsor represents that all legal requirements have been or can be met prior to allocation or disbursement of funds pursuant to Title 137.
5. **NO OBLIGATION OF NET.** Sponsor acknowledges that NET is not obligated to make additional grants beyond this Project, and that the award of this grant does not bind the NET, its Board, or Grants Committee to award similar grants to the Sponsor in the future.
6. **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR.** The Sponsor is and will perform this Agreement as an independent contractor, and as such will have and maintain exclusive control over all of its employees, agents, and operations. Neither the Sponsor nor any person employed by the Sponsor shall act, propose to act or be deemed the NET's agent, representative or employee.
 - a. The Sponsor assumes full and exclusive responsibility for the payment of all premiums, contributions, payroll taxes, and other taxes now or hereafter required by any law or regulation.
 - b. The Sponsor and any contractor or subcontractor will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and orders, including but not limited to, those relating to Social Security, unemployment compensation, OSHA, affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - c. The Sponsor and any contractor or subcontractor of the Sponsor is required to use the EVerify Program authorized by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, 8 U.S.C. 1324a to determine the work eligibility status of newly hired employees physically performing services within the State of Nebraska.
 - d. The Sponsor, by executing this Agreement, certifies and assures that the Sponsor and any contractor or subcontractor operates a drug-free workplace as addressed in the State of Nebraska Drug-Free Workplace Policy of February 9, 2017.
 - e. The Sponsor and any contractor or subcontractor will comply with the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act.
7. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST.** The Sponsor certifies that it will not employ or utilize any individual or entity known by the Sponsor to have a conflict of interest. The Sponsor certifies that there does not now exist any relationship between the Sponsor and any person or entity which gives the appearance of a conflict of interest. Any new, undiscovered, or undisclosed conflicts of interest arising during the duration of this Agreement may be considered a breach of this Agreement and be subject to penalties or termination as set forth in this Agreement.
8. **RELATED PARTIES.** Transactions between the Sponsor and related parties must be disclosed to the NET if grant funds will be used for reimbursement of the transaction or the transaction will be counted towards the Sponsor's cash match. NET may deny reimbursement or reject as match if Sponsor:
 - 1) Fails to receive NET approval prior to incurring expense, or

- 2) Does not include a bid from the related party as part of the grant application.
9. **RECOGNITION.** Sponsor agrees to recognize funding from the NET on all published materials and news releases related to its NET funded project or activities. The NET may also require that personal property partially or wholly funded with grant dollars be identified by a decal or other means provided by the NET acknowledging the source of funding. Sponsor agrees to NET's disclosure of the Sponsor's name, project name and description.
10. **PUBLICATION.** All parties shall have publication and reproduction rights for all reports and materials which are produced as a result of this Agreement.
- ~~11. **INSURANCE.** The Sponsor must provide NET proof of coverage under an insurance policy which covers the NET's investment in personal property with a purchase value greater than \$5,000 or any real property.~~
- 12.11. SITE INSPECTIONS.** NET staff or its designee may schedule visits during the Grant Period and, if applicable, throughout the estimated useful life of personal property, real property, easements or improvements purchased with grant funds. Sponsor will comply with requests for information and provide access for inspection of all grant funded activities to NET or its designee.
- 13.12. NET GRANT FUNDS FOR BIDDING.** NET grant funds cannot be used to offset costs when bidding for services for any other grant funded activities. NET grant funds cannot be used as matching funds for another NET grant, or another grant funded in part by NET.
- 14.13. CLAWBACK.** If the NET determines, at any time prior to or following expiration of this Agreement, that the Sponsor has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, it may terminate this Agreement and take action to recover NET contributions to the Project in addition to other penalties as set forth in this Agreement.
- 15.14. OPERATIONS.** All operation, replacement, and maintenance of the Project components shall be carried out and applied in such a manner so as to accomplish the purposes of the Project as set forth in the Sponsor's application and associated materials, including any amendments thereto which have been approved by the NET, for the useful life of the Project.
- 16.15. ENGINEERING.** The Sponsor will provide for and maintain competent and adequate architectural and engineering supervision and inspection at any construction site as appropriate to ensure that the completed work conforms substantially in accordance with the proposed plans and specifications, according to accepted standards and practices.
- 17.16. APPLICABILITY TO SUBGRANTEE AND CONTRACTORS.** All provisions of this Agreement including but not limited to Section IV (6), will be made binding on any subgrantee or contractor of the Sponsor. The Sponsor will, nonetheless, remain fully obligated under the provisions of this Agreement. Any such subgrantee or contractor of the Sponsor must be authorized to transact business in the State of Nebraska. All subgrantees and contractors are expected to comply with all Nebraska Secretary of State and Department of Revenue registration requirements, including any registration requirements pertaining to types of business entities (e.g. sole proprietorship, partnership, foreign/domestic limited liability company, association, or foreign/domestic

Commented [HA6]: Redundant. This is listed in the Personal Property section of the agreement.

corporation). Construction contractors are expected to meet all applicable requirements of the Nebraska Contractor Registration Act and provide a current, valid certificate of registration to the Sponsor for its records. Upon request of the NET, the Sponsor must submit copies of written agreements executed between the Sponsor and any subgrantees or contractors relating to the Project.

18.17. **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.** If the Project results in any copyrightable material or inventions, the NET and/or the State of Nebraska reserves the right to a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use and/or authorize others to use the work, data collected, or materials for governmental purposes.

19.18. **ANTI-LOBBYING.** To the best of the Sponsor's knowledge and belief, no funds have been paid or will be paid, nor will any gifts be presented by or on behalf of the Sponsor to any person or business for the purpose of influencing or attempting to influence an officer, Board member or employee of the NET, any Nebraska State agency, a State Senator, or other employee of the State of Nebraska in connection with the awarding of any NET grant or the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any NET contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

20.19. **SEVERABILITY.** If any provision of this contract or its application to any person or circumstances is held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity will not affect other provisions of this Agreement.

21.20. **HOLD HARMLESS.** The Sponsor agrees to hold the State of Nebraska, the NET and its Board, officers, agents, and employees harmless from any and all claims, demands, damages, leases, costs, expenses, liability, and actions based upon or arising out of any activities or services performed by the Sponsor or by its officials, officers, employees, agents, subgrantees, or associates.

22.21. **SURVIVAL.** The following terms of this Agreement shall survive expiration or termination of this Agreement: Section IV paragraphs 2-3, 9-~~11-12~~, ~~14-15~~13-14, ~~18~~17, ~~20-23~~19-22, Section V paragraphs 1, 2c, and all of Section VI ~~except paragraph 1c.~~

Commented [HA7]: Updated with edits

23.22. **GOVERNING LAW, VENUE, AND MODIFICATIONS.** Nebraska law shall govern the interpretation and enforcement of this Agreement. The parties acknowledge that this Agreement contains the entire agreement between them, supersedes any prior agreements and conversations, and may not be modified except by written agreement signed by all parties. The parties agree that the Nebraska District Court of Lancaster County, Nebraska is the proper venue for the resolution of any disputes regarding this Agreement.

24.23. **DEBARMENT.** The Sponsor certifies by signing this Agreement that neither the Sponsor nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded by any federal or state department or agency from participating in transactions. The Sponsor shall include the above requirements in any and all subcontracts into which it enters. The Sponsor shall immediately notify the NET if, during the term of this Agreement, the Sponsor becomes debarred.

25-24. **HISTORIC PRESERVATION.** The Sponsor shall undertake at its own expense any action that may be required to determine the presence of cultural resources and to undertake any subsequent measures which may be required to ensure the preservation of such resources which may be discovered. The Sponsor agrees to comply with the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, where historic structures are determined to exist on any site where NET funds are expended.

26-25. **THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES.** The Sponsor shall undertake at its own expense any action that may be required to ensure compliance with the Nongame and Endangered Species Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. Sections 37-801 et. seq.

V. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS OF THE SPONSOR

1. **FINANCIAL REPORTS, ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RECORDS AND REQUEST FOR DISBURSEMENT.** The Sponsor shall submit properly documented statements of costs for which grant funds are sought, pursuant to the terms of this Agreement, for approved grant activities in a manner and form prescribed by the NET. Proper documentation shall be considered to be copies of invoices containing the name and address of the vendor and an itemized list of services or goods with costs and the date of service or delivery. These statements and reports shall be signed by the Project representative of the Sponsor.

The NET will reimburse the Sponsor for these costs following receipt of the statements and reports specified in this section, subject to conditions contained in this section, and elsewhere in this Agreement.

The NET or its agents will have full access to and the right to examine, audit, excerpt, and/or transcribe any of the Sponsor's records pertaining to all matters covered by this Agreement. The Sponsor shall transfer records pertinent to this grant and work undertaken as part of the Project to the NET or its agents upon request.

Financial records, supporting documents and all other records pertinent to this grant shall be retained for a period of three years following notification from the NET Board that the grant has been officially closed, except the records shall be retained beyond the three-year period if audit findings have not been resolved.

2. **PROJECT PROGRESS AND ACTIVITY REPORTS.** The Sponsor agrees to provide periodic reports in a manner and form prescribed by the NET including a narrative description of all Project activities, participants, outcomes, variances, and deviations from the Project application according to the below schedule. ~~Sponsor must include a statement on the continued payment of property taxes or payments in lieu of property taxes on any NET project.~~

a. **Quarterly Reports.** The Sponsor agrees to file such statements and reports according to the following schedule:

PROJECT PERIOD	REPORT DUE DATE
----------------	-----------------

Commented [HA8]: Redundant. This is listed under the Real Estate portion.

FROM INCEPTION THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025	October 31, 2025
FROM OCTOBER 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2025	January 31, 2026
FROM JANUARY 1, 2024, THROUGH MARCH 31, 2026	April 30, 2026
FROM APRIL 1 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2026	July 30, 2026

- b. Annual Reports. Sponsor shall submit an annual report to NET on July 31 of each year in a form and manner prescribed by NET.
- c. Final Report. A final report is due ~~3130~~ days after the completion or termination of the Agreement. This report must include a summary of the activities, partners, and results of the Project from inception to completion and include all matching contributions. This final report must also include quantifying results and statistics about the Project's success.

Commented [HA9]: This is to better align with previous deadlines that we've had in the past.

All financial reports, requests for reimbursement, progress and activity reports are deemed filed or submitted when properly uploaded to the NET Grant Portal.

VI. PERSONAL PROPERTY, CONTRACTUAL SERVICES, AND REAL ESTATE PROVISIONS

1. BIDS FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY AND CONTRACTUAL SERVICES. For any purchase of personal property valued at \$5,000 or more, or purchases of contractual services valued at \$20,000 or more, the Sponsor is required to obtain at least 3 (three) bids for which more than one vendor is available. Specifications shall be drawn such that it will be possible for three or more manufacturers, vendors, or suppliers to submit competitive bids. Unless the grantee is a government agency, program or subdivision with a different bidding policy. In this case, the grantee must submit a copy of its bidding policy to NET and then may proceed according to their publicly adopted policy.

Commented [HA10]: Added additional language to align with our current policy

The Sponsor must accept the lowest reasonable bid when products are substantially equivalent. If Sponsor provides adequate justification, as determined by the NET, why the lowest bid is unacceptable, then NET may approve the selection of a higher bid.

The Sponsor will provide the names of bidders to the NET at the time a request for reimbursement is submitted. Such bids shall be held in the Sponsor's files for three (3) years.

Commented [HA11]: Separated this section from the personal property section to better emphasize the bidding requirements for contractual services.

4.2. PERSONAL PROPERTY. The Sponsor will report to the NET all personal property purchased with full or partial funding in a manner and form prescribed by the NET. The Sponsor will identify by year, make, model, and serial number if available, such personal property as purchased with NET funding in the Sponsor's inventory of the personal property. Personal property and other

personal property purchased with grant funding shall be used only for the purposes of the Project.

- ~~a. Bids. For any purchase of personal property valued at \$5,000 or more, or purchases of services valued at \$20,000 or more, the Sponsor is required to obtain at least 3 (three) bids for personal property or services, for which more than one vendor is available. Specifications shall be drawn such that it will be possible for three or more manufacturers, vendors, or suppliers to submit competitive bids.~~

~~The Sponsor must accept the lowest reasonable bid when products are substantially equivalent. If Sponsor provides adequate justification, as determined by the NET, why the lowest bid is unacceptable, the NET may approve the selection of a higher bid.~~

~~The Sponsor will provide the names of bidders to the NET at the time a request for reimbursement is submitted. Such bids shall be held in the Sponsor's files for three (3) years.~~

Commented [HA12]: Moved to own section

b.a. Insurance. The Sponsor agrees to purchase and maintain property insurance at its own expense to insure all personal property valued at \$5,000 or more which is purchased in whole or in part with funds received from the NET throughout the duration of the Grant Period. This insurance shall include "all risk" insurance for physical loss or damage including, without duplication of coverage, theft, vandalism, and malicious mischief. Such insurance shall be maintained on all such personal property in an amount equal to the replacement value of the personal property during the grant project. The Sponsor shall name the NET beneficiary of the policy and shall assure that proof of coverage shall be kept current. Evidence of current coverage will be provided annually to the NET office by the Sponsor. Upon request for reimbursement the Sponsor will provide the NET with the policy of insurance for personal property purchased, in whole or in part, with funds received from the NET.

c.b. Personal Property Usage. Personal property will be used only for Project purposes throughout the grant project. Sponsor will make effective and efficient use of the personal property.

- a. If personal property is used for a purpose that is not approved, or the Sponsor fails to make effective and efficient use of the personal property throughout the Grant Period, the NET may:
 - i. Require the Sponsor to repay all or a portion of the grant used to reimburse for the purchase of the personal property as determined by the NET,

- ii. Decline reimbursement for other, unrelated approved expenses in an amount up to the grant funds used for personal property purchase, or
- iii. Require the Sponsor to surrender the personal property to the NET.
 1. Sponsor must store surrendered personal property safely until the NET can arrange for the personal property to be redistributed.
 2. Sponsor must complete all paperwork required for transfer of surrendered personal property.

b. Personal property Maintenance. The Sponsor is responsible for all necessary and reasonable maintenance of personal property and may be held liable by the NET for any loss, damage, neglect, or unreasonable deterioration of the personal property throughout the Grant Period.

c. Personal property Liens. The NET will maintain first lien status on all redistributed personal property and personal property purchased, ~~in whole or in part,~~ with grant funds ~~of \$25,000 or more,~~ unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director. ~~The length of the~~ lien on redistributed personal property and personal property purchased with grant funds shall correspond to the useful life of the personal property. NET will file a UCC Financing Statement with the Secretary of State. This statement will be filed when the grantee is a non-government entity. Government entities (including state, county, city, Natural Resource Districts) will be exempt from this provision.

Commented [HA13]: Added to align with our current policy

d. Ownership Interest. The NET maintains an ownership interest in all personal property during its useful life. The Sponsor shall notify the NET when a piece of personal property reaches the end of its useful life. The Sponsor will gain unrestricted ownership after the useful life period expires unless Sponsor was required to surrender the personal property.

e. Personal Property Disposition. The Sponsor shall not sell, transfer, lease, exchange, or encumber personal property purchased with grant funds throughout its useful life without first notifying and receiving written approval from the NET. Funds realized from the sale of personal property will revert to the NET in an amount congruent with the percentage of funding provided by the NET for purchase of the personal property.

2.3. REAL ESTATE. Real estate includes, but is not limited to, land acquisitions, easements, or improvements. Sponsor shall abide by the NET Land Acquisition/Easement Policy. Sponsor shall provide continued access to the properties affected by this Agreement for periodic reviews and visits, annual accounting reports on NET funded real estate and proof of annual tax payments. The NET must also be notified in writing of any plans to sell, lease, transfer, exchange, mortgage, or encumber the property. The Sponsor will be required to obtain written NET approval for any

such transaction and negotiate the terms of the transaction with the NET (which may include partial or whole repayment of the grant). If Sponsor receives a grant from NET for the purchase of real property and subsequently sells or otherwise transfers an ownership interest in such real property, Sponsor shall repay to NET the amount of the grant used to purchase the real property.

VII. TERMINATION OR AMENDMENT OF THE AGREEMENT PRIOR TO PROJECT END DATE

The Sponsor understands and agrees that failure to comply with any of the terms of this Agreement may result in the revocation or cancellation of NET approval and funding and/or a demand for repayment of any funds previously paid to the Sponsor by the NET.

The NET may terminate the Project, in whole or in part, at any time before the expiration date of this Agreement whenever the NET determines that the Sponsor has failed to comply with the conditions herein. The Executive Director of the NET will promptly notify the Sponsor in writing of the determination and the reasons for the termination, together with the effective date as stated in Title 137.

By mutual agreement, the Project may be terminated, modified or amended. When both parties agree to terminate the Agreement, in whole or in part, the parties will agree upon the termination conditions, including the effective date, and in the case of a partial termination, the portion to be terminated. The Sponsor shall not incur new obligations for the terminated portion after the effective date and shall cancel as many outstanding obligations as possible.

[Separate Signature Page follows]

SPONSOR («Sponsor»)

I attest that I am authorized to sign this Agreement on behalf of the Sponsor and that all representations in the application, attachments, and exhibits submitted by Sponsor in connection with this grant are true and correct.

By: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

By: _____
NET Executive Director

Date: _____

By: _____
NET Board Chair

Date: _____

Written
Testimony for
26-121



MIDDLE NIOBRARA NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

303 E Hwy 20
Valentine, NE 69201

Phone: (402) 376-3241
Fax: (402) 376-1040

December 22nd, 2025

Testimony of the Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District (MNNRD)

26-121 – MNNRD Educational Complex

Nebraska Environmental Trust, Board of Directors:

The MNNRD Board of Directors, Staff, and Partners strongly request reconsidering support and funding MNNRD's Educational Complex NET Grant application 26-121.

MNNRD's Educational Complex Grant application 26-121 scored a 29.83 out of 30 points. That score could have very easily been deviated one way or another. With how close we are, we feel the urgency, need, and timing is better than ever with the dual purpose of MNNRD's new office taking shape and getting built over the next year.

The Educational Complex has been at the forefront of discussion when talking about the new MNNRD office. It has been a high priority project since 2018. NRD's are involved in a wide variety of public benefit projects and programs including managing water quality and quantity, protecting water supply for all beneficial uses, erosion and sedimentation control, improving soil health, managing our forests and woodlands, wildlife and fish habitat, and providing sound range management. Improving education efforts across the State of Nebraska is more important now than ever. The youth of Nebraska and next generations will be the ones protecting and conserving our natural resources for years to come, which is vitally important to sustaining Nebraska's resources. The Educational Complex will give individuals the opportunity to learn, understand, and get hands on demonstrations about water resource management, natural resources, forestry management, and range management.

This project meets all eligibility requirements within Title 137 and provides a public educational benefit that far exceeds the dollar amount established with this project. Since the awarding of NET Grant 20-150 in 2020 for the beginning of this education project and the development of the indoor component with this current grant will assist with tying it all together and finishing it up. The MNNRD Board, Staff, and Partners are committed to the long term management, development, and maintenance of the Educational Complex. We feel it will truly be a showcase of the Sandhills and Nebraska.

MNNRD Educational Complex will show the NRD's mission is prevalent, timely, and cost effective by seeing the hands on work that is being done to provide the necessary and crucial educational components to the constituents, public, and youth of the District and all that visit.

Thank you for reconsidering funding for the MNNRD Educational Complex grant application 26-121.

Sincerely,

Mike Murphy – General Manager, MNNRD

Written
Testimony for
26-128

From: Village of Leigh Village Board

To : Lana Merani, Federal Aid Administrator III, Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund

Re: Funding Recommendations for the Nebraska Environmental Trust Committee

The Village of Leigh was recently notified that our project 26 – 128 submitted to the NET Grants Committee has been recommended for final funding approval at the January 8, 2026 annual meeting of the NET Board. We would like to present this testimony in support of our project since we are unable to be present at the meeting.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for considering us for funding for the project entitled “Park Waterway Deepening and Clean Up.” We feel that this project very closely matches the mission of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund to conserve, enhance and restore the natural environments of Nebraska. The Village of Leigh residents take great pride in the local park and in keeping it well maintained for the use of residents as well as campers who use the campground which is part of the park. The waterway that runs through the park adds beauty as well as a connection to the natural environment of the area. Unfortunately, it has not been maintained as well as it should have been over the past 2 decades, therefore leading an unsightly appearance that has become difficult to maintain, as well as an area for infestation of pests that take away from the ability to really enjoy the area.

The Village of Leigh Board has been working to continue to maintain and improve the park area, including the removal and replanting of trees, dredging out the lake area and working with a local youth group (YAC) as well as the Leigh Legacy Fund to try to add more recreational facilities to the park area. Some of the efforts to move forward with projects have been stifled due to the lack of funds available for projects such as this one to deepen and clean up the waterway that runs through the park. As mentioned in the grant application, both the Village of Leigh and the Leigh Legacy Fund are willing to help move this project forward by contributing some of the funding, if the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund can help us with a large portion of the funds.

In recent years, the Village of Leigh has been striving to obtain grant funds to continue to improve our village environment. This is the first time that we have applied for this grant and are very excited to have the opportunity to be recommended for final funding. We appreciate the Nebraska Environmental Trust’s consideration of this project and your continued support of efforts to preserve and enhance our community as well of all of Nebraska’s environmental assets. We hope to hear from you soon with regards to funding approval.

Sincerely,

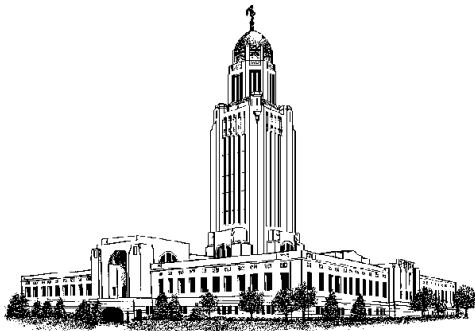
Village of Leigh Chairman and Board

Written
Testimony for
26-146

Nebraska State Legislature

SENATOR JANA HUGHES

District 24
State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4604
(402) 471-2756
jhughes@leg.ne.gov



COMMITTEES

Vice Chairperson - General Affairs
Vice Chairperson - Building and
Maintenance
Agriculture
Natural Resources

December 22, 2025

Nebraska Environmental Trust
Grants Committee
2077 N Street
Suite 310
PO Box 94913
Lincoln, NE 68509-4913

RE: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146

Dear Members of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Grants Committee:

I write to express my strong support for the Nebraska Recycling Council's (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grant (REG): 26-146. I urge the committee to reconsider its position to not recommend funding this important program.

The NRC's REG program has supported hundreds of projects in Nebraska communities over the years. The NRC's most recent grant application included a proposal to support battery collection boxes in communities across our state. This specific proposal is crucial to building the infrastructure necessary to implement the Safe Battery Collection and Recycling Act, LB 36, which passed the Nebraska Legislature with overwhelming support.

LB 36 provides for an industry funded solution to an ongoing public safety issue caused by the improper disposal of removable lithium ion batteries. Catastrophic fires caused by these batteries ending up in our waste and recycling streams have been a major contributor to our state having the 2nd highest rate of fires per ton of solid waste in the nation. These fires have cost millions of dollars in both lost economic activity and taxpayer dollars required to put them out. NRC's REG grant application will serve as an important bridge to incentivize responsible disposal of these batteries prior to the implementation of LB 36 on January 1, 2028.

The NET's approval of NRC's REG proposal will allow for the immediate diversion of these high-energy batteries away from our waste stream and provide for additional local opportunities to recycle them in our many diverse communities across the state. Getting a

jump-start on LB 36 will help ensure that Nebraska is positioned to become a leader among states in collecting and recycling these batteries safely. The economic opportunity this grant program will help support has tremendous upside potential. Again, I urge your reconsideration of NRC's REG proposal and I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jana Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "H".

Senator Jana Hughes
District 24

From: [Carolyn Nolte](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: "Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146"
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 3:11:20 PM

You don't often get email from profcnolte@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Attention Nebraska Environmental Trust,

Please reconsider your funding recommendation regarding the Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146. Recycling equipment is a critical action that directly impacts Nebraska in positive ways by reducing unwanted waste and providing viable, recycled resources.

Grant 26-146 has already diverted 1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material from Nebraska landfills. The program illustrates what successful grant-funded programs do. Evidence of the grant's success is both visible and quantifiable. The numbers show that the grant's investment has a positive and direct impact. The grant's investment shows positive environmental benefits, one of which is reducing a need for additional landfills that would disrupt environments and ecosystems.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust works to conserve "natural Nebraska for future generations." Funding the Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146 will continue to reduce waste, an investment that has and will directly correlate to conserving Nebraska spaces for all Nebraskans.

Thank you for your reconsideration.

Regards,

Carolyn S. Nolte
940 South 20th Street
Lincoln, NE 68510



*Protecting Lives, Protecting Property,
Protecting the Future*

Upper Loup

Natural Resources District

39252 Highway 2 Thedford, NE 69166

Phone 308-645-2250 Fax 308-645-2308

www.upperloupnrd.org

ulnrd@upperloupnrd.org

December 17, 2025

Nebraska Environmental Trust

RE: Funding for Recycling Equipment Grant Upper Loup NRD Letter of Support

Environmental Trust,

On behalf of the Upper Loup Natural Resources District, I want to express our enthusiastic support for continued grant funding of the Nebraska Recycling Councils (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grant (REG). Our NRD has been a previous awardee of the REG and have served on the REG Grants Committee for over 8 years, so we have directly observed the impacts that this has had on Nebraska constituents.

This grant has supported more than 200 projects serving more than 75 Nebraska communities in all eight regions of the NET funding map. Since the inception of this program hundreds of millions of pounds of recyclable and compostable materials have been diverted from landfills with grant-funded equipment. Without this grant, recycling opportunities across Nebraska would be limited thus reducing the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery.

The REG aligns perfectly with not only the waste management funding category but also the shared goals of conserving and protecting our state's resources such as surface and ground water quality, soil and air quality. This has been indicated by the how well the REG has scored well using the NET's criteria (scoring above average to high).

I firmly believe that investing in projects that prioritize environmental conservation, protection and sustainability is not only essential for preserving our natural resources but also critical for ensuring the well-being of current and future generations. As such, I wholeheartedly endorse this grant application and urge you to consider it favorably.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Anna Baum, Upper Loup NRD General Manager
308-645-2250



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

3800 VerMaas Place, Suite 102, Lincoln, NE 68502 | 402.436.2384 | nrcne.org

To Whom It May Concern,

The Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) program previously funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust is not only highly valued and widely used by diverse communities and organizations across Nebraska—it is essential to the state’s ability to advance sustainable materials management. Many small villages, municipalities, and local businesses simply would not have the financial capacity to improve or maintain their recycling and materials management systems without the assistance provided through REG.

Nebraska continues to lag behind many other states in sustainable materials management due to limited funding and insufficient emphasis on its long-term importance. The Nebraska Environmental Trust’s stated purpose is “to complement existing activities, stimulate private investment, and emphasize long-term gain.” The REG program exemplifies this mission by delivering practical, impactful support that produces lasting economic and environmental benefits for Nebraskans.

At the Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC), our mission is to maximize the economic and environmental value of resource recovery throughout the state. The smaller-scale recycling equipment grants made possible through REG play a critical role in this effort by offering accessible funding pathways. For many communities, these grants are far less intimidating and more attainable than pursuing larger federal or state programs such as those offered by the EPA, USDA, NDWEE, or NET itself.

As an NRC Program Director who previously worked with the REG program, I witnessed firsthand through site visits how critical this grant is to communities across the state. The program has also enabled NRC and NET to maintain a statewide perspective on materials management efforts. In the absence of mandated recycling data reporting, the REG program has played a vital role in helping to fill key data gaps.



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

3800 VerMaas Place, Suite 102, Lincoln, NE 68502 | 402.436.2384 | nrcne.org

"A prosperous future depends on a sound natural environment." The REG program directly supports that future by empowering local entities to take meaningful action. We respectfully ask that you reconsider your decision not to recommend this grant application to the board and allow this proven, impactful program to continue serving Nebraska communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carina Olivetti

NRC Program Director

December 17, 2025



Nebraska Environmental Trust Board
env.trust@nebraska.gov

Re: Testimony in Support of Recycling Equipment Grant Funding

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust Board Members,

On behalf of ECHO Collective, I am writing to express our strong support for continued funding of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant program and to share how this investment has positively impacted our organization and community.

ECHO Collective is a Lincoln-based nonprofit that partners with New American women to build economic stability and community connection through entrepreneurship and creative programs. Many of our initiatives center on textile-based work, where sustainability and cultural knowledge are deeply intertwined.

In 2023, ECHO Collective received a Recycling Equipment Grant through the Nebraska Recycling Council. This support allowed us to significantly expand our textile recycling and reuse capacity. As a direct result, we have diverted 8,446.80 pounds of textile waste from landfills, instead repurposing or recycling these materials through community-based programs.

The grant's impact extends beyond measurable diversion. The equipment created reliable recycling infrastructure within our organization and strengthened our ability to model environmental stewardship for program participants, many of whom integrate these practices into their own small businesses. It also enabled ECHO Collective to serve as a local access point for textile recycling, addressing a critical gap in responsible disposal options.

Without this program, this level of environmental and community impact would not have been possible. We respectfully urge the Nebraska Environmental Trust to continue funding the Recycling Equipment Grant program, which delivers clear, measurable benefits for Nebraska communities.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to environmental stewardship.

Sincerely,

Kelly Ross
Founder and Executive Director
ECHO Collective



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

3800 VerMaas Place, Suite 102
Lincoln, NE 68502
402.436.2384
www.nrcne.org

December 22, 2025

Nebraska Environmental Trust
2077 N Street, Suite 310
Lincoln, NE 68510

Dear Board Members of the Nebraska Environmental Trust

I am writing as the Program Director for Nebraska Recycling Council and manager of the Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) program. I respectfully and strongly urge you to approve application 26-146 for funding, as the decision to not fund this program would have far-reaching and lasting consequences for communities across Nebraska and for the long-term health of our environment.

In my role overseeing the Recycling Equipment Grant, I hear regularly from sub-grantees including Nebraska schools, villages, and businesses about the tangible impact this program has on their communities. With access to proper recycling equipment, schools can teach students correct recycling practices and instill lifelong habits at an early age. Small towns and villages can build or expand essential recycling infrastructure to meet local needs. Nebraska businesses use REG funding to strengthen their recycling efforts and reduce waste. These projects are practical, visible, and effective.

The Recycling Equipment Grant has a long and successful history, predating the 2017 merger of the Nebraska State Recycling Association and WasteCap NE. Since the REG program was continued under the Nebraska Recycling Council, the program has helped divert more than 1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material from Nebraska landfills. Over time, REG has supported approximately 200 projects across 75+ Nebraska communities. Few programs have such broad reach and *measurable* environmental impact.

Recycling Equipment Grant funding extends far beyond Nebraska Recycling Council. Small towns, schools, businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and larger metropolitan areas have all benefited from this program. The accompanying map (Figure 1) shows where funds have been distributed in recent years. I encourage you to interact with the map using the link provided.

<https://nrcne.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=be8b61f0fb834247828faeffd7ce16de>

Reducing waste sent to Nebraska's landfills is a critical component of conserving and restoring our natural environments. The Recycling Equipment Grant directly advances these goals by providing communities with the tools they need to recycle effectively and sustainably. Without this program, many communities would face significant barriers to maintaining or expanding necessary recycling services.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to environmental stewardship in Nebraska. I urge you to support 26-146 and allow this impactful program to continue serving communities statewide.

Sincerely,

Grace Barton
Program Director
Nebraska Recycling Council

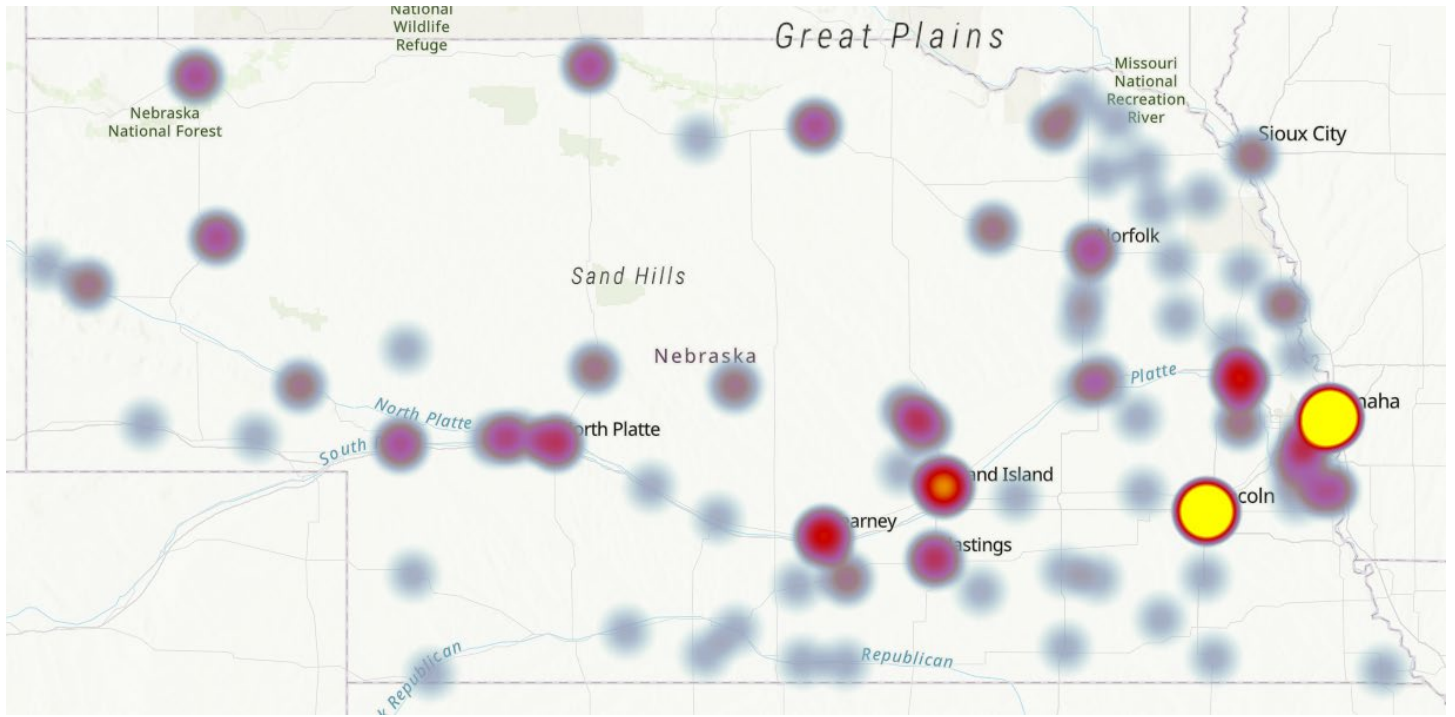


Figure 1



Board of Trustees

Justin Spooner
Board Chair

Aaron Johnson
Treasurer

Leah Vetter
Chair Emeritus

Tobi Mathouser
President & CEO

Miriam Blair

Jisella Brough

Nadia Blazeovich

Nick Burlanek

Juan Padilla

Blake Vardaman

Andrew Wilson



December 22, 2025

Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust Board Members,

Goodwill Omaha urges the Nebraska Environmental Trust to continue funding the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) program, which is essential to protecting recycling access, advancing resource recovery, and supporting the missions of both NRC and NET to conserve and restore Nebraska's natural environment.

The Recycling Equipment Grant has directly helped us expand our recycling and waste diversion capacity, improving both operational efficiency and environmental outcomes in our community. The baler support provided through the Equipment Grant has been fundamental to Goodwill Omaha's ability to advance textile circularity and keep reusable materials in productive use rather than in the landfill. In 2024 alone, our two balers enabled us to divert nearly 7 million pounds of textiles from area landfills, turning what would have been waste into valuable feedstock for reuse and recycling markets while sustaining our mission-driven operations.

In October 2025, we replaced one of our aging balers, and that new equipment has already proven crucial to maintaining and growing our impact. In 2025, we have baled more than 6 million pounds of textiles to date, ensuring consistent throughput, improved safety, and fewer breakdowns in our 96,000-square-foot Retail Outlet Center, where all unsold donations from 16 Goodwill locations across Eastern Nebraska and Southwest Iowa are processed. This reliability is essential because any disruption in baling directly affects our ability to move textiles into downstream reuse and recycling markets and would send more material to landfills.

The grant-supported baler is not just a piece of equipment, it is a key enabler of Goodwill Omaha's circular business model. By efficiently consolidating and preparing textiles and other materials for end markets, the baler helps us:

- Maximize landfill diversion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste disposal.



4805 N. 72nd Street, Omaha, NE 68134 | 402.341.4609
GoodwillOmaha.org

- Generate revenue from recycled materials that is reinvested into our free job training, employment placement, and work experience programs, including opportunities for individuals with disabilities and others facing significant employment barriers.
- Provide stable, skills-based jobs to more than 60 employees at our Retail Operations Center who manage sorting, baling, and shipment of recyclables 4–5 times per week, at loads of 38,000–40,000 pounds per shipment besides other material management.

Because of this equipment, Goodwill Omaha can operate at a scale that meaningfully supports Nebraska’s broader zero-waste and circular economy goals. Our operations have diverted millions of pounds of materials from landfills in recent years, and the continued availability of Recycling Equipment Grants is vital for organizations like ours to replace aging machinery, expand capacity, and innovate new circular pathways for textiles and other materials.

On behalf of Goodwill Omaha, there is deep appreciation for the Nebraska Recycling Council and the Nebraska Environmental Trust for investing in infrastructure that delivers measurable environmental, economic, and social returns. The Recycling Equipment Grant has had a direct, tangible impact on our organization’s ability to divert textiles at scale, support job placements, and strengthen the communities we serve. Continued funding for this program will ensure that Goodwill Omaha and many other Nebraska organizations can sustain and grow these outcomes in the years ahead.

We respectfully urge the Nebraska Environmental Trust to continue funding the Recycling Equipment Grant program, which is essential to sustaining our operations, advancing our mission, and expanding opportunities for the underprivileged communities we serve.

Sincerely,



Mehreen Chowdhury
Sustainability Manager
Goodwill Omaha





NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

3800 VerMaas Place, Suite 102, Lincoln, NE 68502 | 402.436.2384 | nrcne.org

To the Members of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board,

I am writing in support of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) (application 26-146) program and to respectfully request your reconsideration of continued funding for this critical resource. As an employee of the Nebraska Recycling Council, I have seen firsthand the meaningful and lasting impact this program has created across our state. From Falls City to Chadron—and nearly everywhere in between—the REG program has helped communities strengthen their recycling infrastructure and reduce waste.

Since 2016, more than **1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material** have been diverted from Nebraska landfills as a direct result of this program. To date, **193 entities** have utilized REG funding to build or expand their recycling efforts, helping communities divert more waste and operate more efficient programs. These outcomes would not have been possible without the Recycling Equipment Grant program and the support that has sustained it.

On a more personal level, I come from a village of fewer than 500 people in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills. The town of Mullen may not be widely known, but for those of us who call it home, there is great pride in maintaining its beauty. Recycling plays an important role in that effort; however, effective recycling is nearly impossible without proper equipment and reliable funding.

Stapleton and Arthur, two villages near my hometown, were previous recipients of Recycling Equipment Grants. Both received funding simply to provide recycling trailers for their schools and communities—an investment that made recycling accessible where it otherwise would not have been. Small villages like Mullen, Stapleton, and Arthur often lack the financial capacity to develop recycling programs that can truly succeed without outside support.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your thoughtful consideration of funding grant application 26-146. Continued investment in this program ensures that communities of all sizes, especially rural communities, can continue to reduce waste, protect local environments, and build sustainable systems for the future.

Sincerely,

Jadyn Chasek

Nebraska Recycling Council - Program Director



Dec 16, 2025

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust,

I was disappointed to learn that grant funding for recycling equipment for the Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) is not being recommended. This is concerning, as our organization—and many others across our community—has directly benefited from NRC’s work and support over the past several years.

Through NRC, we have received grants for recycling bins, as have local schools, enabling both our organization and students throughout the community to actively participate in recycling. Additionally, a grant for a recycling trailer significantly expanded our capacity, providing the space and means necessary to transport recycling materials and bins across the county. These investments have had a measurable impact: our small organization now recycles and composts more than 60,000 pounds of material annually, representing a substantial diversion from landfills over the past five years.

NRC’s impact extends beyond our organization alone. Because Glassman Recycling received grant funding to purchase glass collection and recycling equipment, we were able to launch a local glass recycling program—an option that simply did not exist in our area before. This illustrates how NRC’s support creates ripple effects that strengthen recycling infrastructure well beyond a single organization.

The direct impact of NRC on Keep Cass County Beautiful cannot be overstated. Their support has allowed us to grow each year, consistently meet and exceed our goals, and build a program that is trusted and respected throughout our community. Denying funding for recycling equipment risks undermining this progress at a time when communities are increasingly relying on these programs to reduce waste and protect natural resources.

I respectfully encourage you to reconsider the decision to deny funding for the Nebraska Recycling Council. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss the tangible outcomes of NRC's work in our community, I would be happy to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

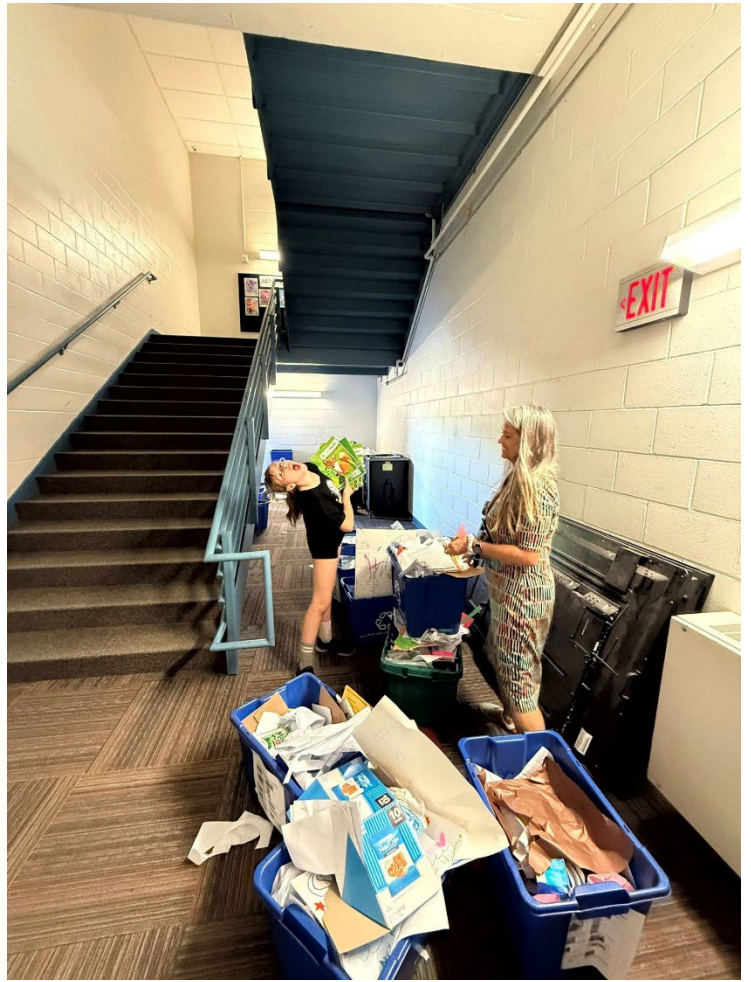


Dana Stahl

Executive Director

Keep Cass County Beautiful

director@keepcasscountybeautiful.com or 231-878-7999



December 18, 2025

Members of the Nebraska Environmental Trust:

I am writing to recommend that the Nebraska Environmental Trust **please** continue to fund the Recycling Equipment Grant under the supervision of the Nebraska Recycling Council. For the past six years, I have had the privilege to be a reviewer for the recycling equipment grants. This opportunity has allowed me to observe how NET funding has provided valuable financial support for recycling equipment to small towns, schools, businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and larger metropolitan areas. As past director of Keep Cass County Beautiful, this non-profit has received several equipment grants that have allowed the organization to expand recycling efforts and make a difference in Cass County. Resources are very limited that support recycling efforts in the state of Nebraska and removing the funding will only make recycling more difficult.

The Recycling Equipment Grant has a long and successful history, predating the 2017 merger of the Nebraska State Recycling Association and WasteCap NE. Since REG was continued under the Nebraska Recycling Council, the program has helped Nebraska divert more than 1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material from Nebraska landfills.

The grants have supported more than 200 projects across more than 75 Nebraska communities. Grant-funded equipment has included balers, forklifts, classroom recycling bins, trucks, and trailers. These are tools that make recycling possible and efficient for Nebraskans.

If NET ultimately denies our grant, the Nebraska Recycling Council would no longer have funding to offer Recycling Equipment Grants in future cycles, limiting recycling opportunities across the state and reducing the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska.

Please continue funding for the Recycling Equipment Grant that helps support NRC's mission to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska, and NET's mission to conserve, enhance, and restore the natural environments of Nebraska.

Respectfully,

Linda S. Behrns

NRC Grant Reviewer

Retired Executive Director, Keep Cass County Beautiful

513 Vine Street
Louisville, NE 68937
402-949-9052



Lincoln Public Schools

Operations – Custodial, Maintenance & Facilities • 800 S. 24th Street • Lincoln, NE 68510 • (402) 436-1072

December 17, 2025

Nebraska Environmental Trust
2077 N Street, Suite 310
Lincoln, NE 68510

Dear Board members,

I am writing to express Lincoln Public Schools' strong support for the Nebraska Recycling Council and their proposed Recycling Equipment Grant project (Application ID #26-146). We believe that this project's recent exclusion from those recommended to the Board for funding is an omission that would have significant negative repercussions for the state of resource recovery and environmental protection in Nebraska.

The funding provided through previous iterations of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant has allowed for communities in every corner of Nebraska to strengthen their efforts to conserve our shared natural environments.

Lincoln Public Schools has seen firsthand the positive impact that the Recycling Equipment Grant has in furthering waste diversion efforts in our district. This grant enabled us to purchase equipment to improve recycling practices at outdoor athletic facilities in 2018, and enhance recycling efforts and expand organics collection inside our school facilities in 2023 when other funding sources fell through. This equipment serves as visible, consistent infrastructure within our buildings and the Lincoln community to promote diversion of waste from the landfill and reduce contamination in our waste streams.

For example, grant-funded containers purchased in 2023 allowed an elementary school to begin schoolwide composting – a system where compostable materials are collected in every room of the building rather than just the cafeteria. In the school year following the transition, the school sent 27% less waste to the landfill compared to the year prior, recycling and composting over 50,000 pounds of material.

“Since launching school-wide composting, [our school] has seen a noticeable shift in how students think about waste. In classrooms and common spaces, students regularly pause to consider where items belong before placing them in a receptacle and often ask questions when they are unsure. The program has reinforced classroom learning while fostering pride in taking care of our school and planet.” -First grade teacher

This is one of many examples of how the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant has positively impacted Lincoln Public Schools and the young environmental stewards that walk our halls every day. I strongly encourage the Board to fund their 2026 project to ensure that critical recycling opportunities across the state can achieve the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska, especially as other equipment funding options grow fewer and farther between.

Sincerely,

Brittney Wees
Sustainability Coordinator, Lincoln Public Schools



MIDDLE NIOBRARA
NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

303 E Hwy 20
Valentine, NE 69201

Phone: (402) 376-3241
Fax: (402) 376-1040

December 22nd, 2025

Testimony of the Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District (MNNRD)

Nebraska Environmental Trust, Board of Directors:

The MNNRD supports the continued NET funding for the Nebraska Recycle Council for obtaining Equipment for use in recycling.

The district has been awarded 2 of these grants over the years. One grant was for the paper shredder that allows us to repurpose and reuse all our paper waste for tree packing. The second grant was for a used payloader that allows the district to work with communities with storm damage trees, tire recycling, electronic recycling, large paper shredding events, and composting activities.

This recycle equipment grant goes along way with partnering with other agencies, communities, and especially ties in with the former NDEE Litter and Waste Reduction funding. The monthly application and review period promotes timeliness and aids in being able to purchase used equipment when found and before sold.

Thank you for reconsidering funding for the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant.

Sincerely,

Mike Murphy – General Manager MNNRD

Alan Weiss

December 20, 2025

President, Papio Valley Nursery

alan@papiovalley.com

Nebraska Environmental Council Letter of Support

Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146

Papio Valley Nursery in Papillion, Nebraska has utilized Nebraska Environmental Council's grants to purchase equipment that we use to grind and dye wood waste material to keep this waste out of our local landfills. It is hard for small companies to make the expensive purchases it requires to grind wood waste. Papio Valley Nursery would not be able to be involved with removing wood waste from landfills without the help of grants, like the grant provided by The Nebraska Recycling Council. In the five years Papio Valley has been recycling wood waste, we have partnered with the City of Omaha to take their wood waste to recycle and turn into mulch products for landscapers. Papio Valley Nursery has been a valuable partner to the City of Omaha every year since we started grinding mulch, but in 2024, the relationship became very important to the City of Omaha. Two storms in the spring of 2024 caused massive tree damage in almost every part of the city and surrounding suburbs. Tornados, mainly in Lancaster and Douglas counties, did tremendous damage especially in Elkhorn, Nebraska. A few weeks later, straight line winds exceed 90 miles per hour through Douglas and Sarpy counties for 20 minutes, knocking down already damaged trees and damaging new trees. The damage of these two storms were at a level that no one had seen in Omaha. The tree waste really piled up quickly at City of Omaha parks and wood waste storage areas. They needed an outlet for all this wood waste. Since many of the companies that took wood waste were quickly filled, the City of Omaha leaned heavily on Papio Valley Nursery to take wood waste and help remove from the over capacitated locations. Papio Valley took over 30,000 yards from the city in the fall of 2024 and has taken over 81,000 yards in the five years we have been accepting wood waste.

In addition, Papio Valley Nursery provides trees back to the City of Omaha in a trade for wood waste. To date, Papio Valley Nursery has supplied over 500 seven-gallon trees to the City of Omaha for their park's projects. Papio Valley Nursery is proud of our relationship

with the City of Omaha and enjoys giving back with trees being planted in Omaha and the surrounding communities,

Papio Valley Nursery is very grateful to be picked by the Nebraska Environmental Council to receive grant money to help purchase machinery to reduce wood waste going into local landfills. We hope The NET Board will see how valuable The Nebraska Environmental Council's work is in supporting Nebraska companies and non-profits who are recycling in Nebraska.

Alan Weiss

President, Papio Valley Nursery

**VILLAGE OF DODGE
226 N. ELM STREET
DODGE, NE 68633
402-693-2239**

December 19, 2025

Dear Nebraska Recycling Council,

In the past, the Village of Dodge has been fortunate to be the recipient of a couple grants from the Nebraska Recycling Council for the purchase of equipment - balers, forklifts, and pallet jacks for our recycling program. With the cost of day-to-day operations, it would have been almost impossible to afford this equipment.

With the purchase of this equipment, the Village of Dodge has been able to accept recyclables from neighboring towns – Snyder, Scribner, North Bend, and Howells. Without this funding, we would not have been able to provide this service and probably wouldn't be able to continue with our own recycling program.

This is a very good program, and I hope you take serious consideration and continue funding the Recycling Equipment Grant.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Grovijohn".

Tom Grovijohn
Utility Superintendent



Village of Hershey, Nebraska

Shelby Morrison, Village Clerk

PO Box 353 | 104 S. Lincoln Ave.
Hershey, NE 69143

O: 308.368.5840 | F: 308.368.7764
E: shelby@villageofhershey.com

December 15, 2025

To whom it may concern:

I am the Clerk & Treasurer for the Village of Hershey, population 665. We have been able to use grant funding for our recycling program multiple times in the past. Recycling grant funding is important for small communities like ours. Unlike larger cities, villages operate with limited budgets, minimal staff, and aging infrastructure. While our residents care deeply about protecting the environment and keeping our community clean, we often lack the financial resources to maintain or improve recycling programs without outside assistance.

Without these funds, recycling programs are often the first to be reduced or eliminated when budgets tighten, forcing more waste into landfills and increasing long-term costs for municipalities. For small communities, recycling grants are not a luxury, they are necessary to continue functioning. Continued funding ensures that we can sustain environmentally responsible practices, meet community expectations, and contribute to statewide recycling and sustainability goals.

I hope that funding is continued for recycling grant programs that support the challenges and needs of small communities like Hershey. Thank you for your time & consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shelby Morrison". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Shelby Morrison, Clerk/Treasurer
Village of Hershey



To Whom it may concern,

We are a Village of approximately 1,300 people in West Central Nebraska that was awarded the recycling grant in 2021. The reason that we applied for the grant was to replace the cardboard bailer that had been in use for 26 years. As a Village in West Central Nebraska, we have other Villages close by that also use our facility to drop off cardboard at. In total we are serving a majority of 4 communities on a regular basis. This includes our community with numerous businesses and other entities. With how online shopping being a convince in our society we are always inundated with cardboard that is needing taken care of. The bailer that was awarded to us in 2021 has made a viable impact on not only our community, businesses and entities, but also the surrounding communities, businesses and entities. If it weren't for the Recycling Equipment Grant, we would not be able to offer the cardboard recycling program that we do. It has made our community and surrounding communities cleaner and less waste being put in dumpsters and landfills and better communities to live in.

Sincerely,

Village of Sutherland

1200 1st St
Sutherland, NE 69165
308-386-4721
clerkvos@gpcom.net



To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express our strong support for the Nebraska Recycling Council and the Recycling Equipment Grant program. This grant has been instrumental in advancing recycling efforts within our community and has directly strengthened our organization's ability to serve residents, businesses, and institutions in our service area.

Through the Recycling Equipment Grant, our organization has been able to purchase essential recycling infrastructure, including recycling bins, clear and informative labels that identify accepted materials, and a compactor truck. Each of these investments has had a meaningful and lasting impact on our operations. The bins and labels have improved participation and reduced contamination by helping community members better understand proper recycling practices, while the compactor truck has significantly enhanced our efficiency and capacity to collect recyclable materials.

These improvements have led to stronger recycling outcomes in our area, increased accessibility to recycling services, and a more sustainable and effective collection system. The support provided through this grant has allowed us to expand and maintain services that would otherwise be financially out of reach.

Without the assistance of the Recycling Equipment Grant, our organization would not be able to operate at our current capacity or deliver the level of service our community depends on. This program has been invaluable in helping us fulfill our mission and strengthen recycling efforts across our region.

We are deeply grateful for the continued leadership and support of the Nebraska Recycling Council and strongly encourage the ongoing funding and expansion of the Recycling Equipment Grant so that organizations like ours can continue to make a positive environmental impact.

Warm Regards,
The Staff and Board
Western Resources Group LLC
Ogallala, NE



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

3800 VerMaas Place, Suite 102, Lincoln, NE 68502 | 402.436.2384 | nrcne.org

<mailto:env.trust@nebraska.gov> Subject: Funding Decision Nebraska Recycling Council,
Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146

Attn: NET Board of Directors

My name is Kimberly Carroll Steward, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC). I respectfully submit this testimony in response to being informed that funding for NRC's Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) (application 26-146) through the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) was not recommended for funding. I urge reconsideration and offer this testimony to highlight the long-standing value, statewide impact, and environmental significance of this program.

The Recycling Equipment Grant has a proven and successful history that predates the 2017 merger of the Nebraska State Recycling Association and WasteCap Nebraska. Since continuing under the Nebraska Recycling Council, the REG program has played a critical role in strengthening recycling infrastructure across the state. To date, the program has helped Nebraska divert more than **1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material** from landfills—an outcome that **directly advances Nebraska's environmental, economic, and conservation goals.**

This diversion has a direct and measurable impact on Nebraska's natural resources. By reducing the volume of material disposed of in landfills, REG helps **preserve land capacity, minimize soil and groundwater contamination risks, and reduce methane emissions associated with waste disposal.** Recycling also **conserves raw materials and energy by decreasing the need for virgin resource extraction, protecting Nebraska's air, water, and soil while extending the useful life of existing landfills statewide.**

Through REG, NRC has supported more than **200 projects in over 75 communities** across Nebraska, benefiting small towns, rural areas, schools, nonprofits, businesses, local governments, and metropolitan communities alike. Importantly, the Recycling Equipment Grant is not a recurring award to the same entities year after year. New awardees are regularly added, ensuring that funding reaches a diverse and evolving set of communities as recycling needs and opportunities change across the state.

A key strength of the REG program is that it removes the significant administrative burden of complex grant applications from smaller and capacity-limited organizations. Many REG applicants are small teams that lack the staffing or expertise to apply directly to NET or only require modest amounts of funding. Without REG, these organizations are often left



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

3800 VerMaas Place, Suite 102, Lincoln, NE 68502 | 402.436.2384 | nrcne.org

with limited options—either **submitting small, individual applications directly to NET, increasing administrative burden for both the applicant and NET, or forgoing needed infrastructure altogether.**

NRC assumes responsibility for grant administration, oversight, and reporting, allowing schools, rural communities, and small nonprofits to access recycling infrastructure that would otherwise be out of reach. Additionally, NRC provides technical assistance in grant writing to member organizations, building local capacity and supporting access to funding opportunities beyond REG. This **structure ensures that access to recycling infrastructure is driven by community need and environmental impact, rather than organizational capacity alone.**

All Recycling Equipment Grant awards require a **cash match from grantees**, ensuring **strong local investment and leveraging Nebraska Environmental Trust funds to maximize impact.** Minimum match requirements are structured to reflect organizational type and community size:

- **20%** for nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies
- **20%** for communities with populations of **5,000 or under**
- **25%** for communities with populations of **5,000 to 10,000**
- **30%** for communities with populations of **10,000 and above**
- **50%** for **for-profit businesses**

These match requirements promote accountability, fiscal responsibility, and long-term sustainability while increasing the total value of each funded project.

Grant-funded equipment has included balers, forklifts, trucks, trailers, and classroom recycling bins—essential tools that make recycling feasible, efficient, and accessible. In addition to equipment deployment, **REG incorporates standardized reporting and data collection requirements that capture information on material types, volumes, and system performance.** This data collection helps **address a well-documented gap in statewide recycling data in Nebraska**, providing insight into material flows, infrastructure needs, and environmental outcomes that would otherwise go unmeasured.

By enabling local collection and processing of recyclable materials while building consistent data reporting, **REG strengthens Nebraska's ability to make informed,**



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

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resource-conscious decisions that protect land, water, and air resources statewide.

These investments help ensure that recycling opportunities are not limited by geography or community size, promoting more equitable access to recycling services across Nebraska.

The impact of this program extends beyond waste diversion. Recycling equipment funded through REG supports local jobs, reduces landfill costs, strengthens municipal and nonprofit operations, and improves the overall efficiency of Nebraska's resource recovery systems. Collectively, these outcomes protect Nebraska's natural resources while improving transparency and accountability in recycling outcomes statewide. These results **align closely with the Nebraska Environmental Trust's mission to conserve, enhance, and restore Nebraska's natural environments, while also supporting NRC's mission to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska.**

If the Nebraska Environmental Trust ultimately **denies funding for this grant** (application 26-146), NRC would no longer have the capacity to offer Recycling Equipment Grants in future cycles. This would significantly limit recycling opportunities statewide, reduce the availability of data needed for informed environmental decision-making, and weaken the infrastructure necessary to conserve natural resources and achieve long-term environmental and economic benefits.

For these reasons, I respectfully **request continued support for the Recycling Equipment Grant program, application 26-146.** REG represents a strategic, high-impact investment in Nebraska's communities, economy, data-driven environmental stewardship, and natural environment, and its continuation is vital to sustaining and expanding recycling access across the state.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Nebraska's natural resources and communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Carroll Steward, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Nebraska Recycling Council
Lincoln, NE 68502

From: [Shari Shanks](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Letter of Support
Date: Monday, December 22, 2025 1:47:59 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-zouvdo3q.png](#)

You don't often get email from director@lincolnbikekitchen.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear **Nebraska Environmental Trust Board Members**,

I am writing in support of the Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) Program administered by the Nebraska Recycling Council with funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The Lincoln Bike Kitchen was fortunate to receive an equipment grant through this program for a trailer used to haul scrap metal generated through our bicycle recycling efforts. This equipment has been invaluable to our operations. To date, it has allowed us to transport approximately **3.5 tons of scrap metal** to a local metal recycler.

In addition to hauling scrap metal, the Lincoln Bike Kitchen is committed to comprehensive recycling practices. We recycle hundreds of used bicycle tires annually, along with seats and reusable parts from bicycles that are not repairable, ensuring that as little material as possible enters the waste stream.

The Recycling Equipment Grant Program plays a critical role in building and strengthening recycling infrastructure across Nebraska. Our experience demonstrates the meaningful, measurable impact this funding can have for nonprofit organizations working to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Thank you for your continued investment in recycling efforts throughout our state.



Shari Weiss Shanks

Executive Director 308 S. 21st St.
Lincoln, NE 68510 lincolnbikekitchen.org

Our mission is to transform lives by making cycling accessible to everyone.

From: [Angie Nelson](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146
Date: Friday, December 19, 2025 3:37:40 PM

You don't often get email from angelagracenelson@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

I'm a Nebraska native and long-time Lincoln homeowner. I'm writing to join the support around continuing the recycling equipment grant program and recycling initiatives in our city.

Thank you,

Angie Nelson
811 Peach St., 68502
312.371.7174

From: [William Gordon](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Monday, December 22, 2025 4:02:18 PM

You don't often get email from williamgordon@cccneb.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

I am writing you in regard to the Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146 that funded equipment which has included balers, forklifts, classroom recycling bins, trucks, and trailers. These are tools that make recycling possible and efficient while helping to improve equitable access for Nebraskans statewide.

This funding has helped our students and staff keep thousands of pounds of food waste from going to the landfill. It has also helped us educate others about the importance of composting food waste.

I hope you reconsider the value of the recycling equipment grant administered by the Nebraska Recycling Council and the impact it has had on the communities it serves.

Thanks for your consideration,

Ash Gordon

WILLIAM GORDON

PT SUSTAINABILITY PROFESSIONAL INTERN
williamgordon@cccneb.edu |



www.cccneb.edu

3134 W HIGHWAY 34 | PO BOX 4903 | GRAND ISLAND | NE, 68802

TOLL FREE 1.877.222.0780

Central Community College maximizes student and community success.

From: [Barnett, Emma M.](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Cc: [Linder, Larry D.](#); [Rogers, Timothy F. \[Tim\]](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Monday, December 22, 2025 5:13:36 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

You don't often get email from embarne@nppd.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good evening,

Please see our comments on the Recycling Equipment Grant, below:

At NPPD, we believe all resource-conscious activities are important, whether large or small. Besides the potential for payback in dollars for market value of recyclable materials, recycling creates employment opportunities, extends the life of landfills, saves energy and resources, and reduces taxes. Our communities, our teammates, and our customers believe in the benefits of recycling.

In 2024, Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) collectively recycled approximately 1.6 million pounds of scrap metal, 100,000 pounds of batteries, 15,000 pounds of paper, 24,000 pounds of electronic waste, 165,000 tons of fly and bottom ash, and 75,000 gallons of oil.

If NPPD and our Nebraska communities do not have recycling options, the only alternative is to dispose of resources at our local landfills. This may result in early landfill closures, thereby potentially incurring high replacement costs. Further, this will reduce the availability of recycled resources into the manufacturing network.

NPPD supports Nebraska Recycling Council's continued funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust's Recycling Equipment Grant that helps make recycling possible for communities across Nebraska.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments.

Kind regards,

Emma M. Barnett

Environmental Restoration Specialist

Kearney Operations Center



M: 308-440-0088
900 4th Avenue, Box 2170
Kearney, NE 68848-2170

From: [Alexa Armendariz](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 4:36:16 PM

You don't often get email from alexa95364@cccneb.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

Please reconsider the decision to deny funding for the Recycling Equipment Grant, as this program has delivered measurable environmental, educational, and economic benefits to Central Community College.

Through funding provided by the Recycling Equipment Grant program, Central Community College received multiple large wooden compost bins. This equipment serves as the foundation of our campus composting system, providing a central location where food waste from campus cafeterias, break rooms, and the Culinary Arts department is processed and converted into viable, nutrient-rich compost. This system has significantly reduced the amount of organic waste sent to landfills while allowing Central Community College to maintain a practical, hands-on approach to waste diversion that is both manageable and effective.

The finished compost is reused on campus in meaningful ways. It is incorporated into the Culinary Arts gardens, where students grow fresh produce used for coursework and the on-campus restaurant, creating a closed-loop system that connects waste reduction directly to education and food production. Compost is also applied to the Native Nebraska Pollinator Gardens, where it improves soil health, increases nutrient availability, and enhances the soil's ability to retain moisture. This water-retention capacity is especially critical during Nebraska's harsh summers, helping plants remain resilient during periods of drought.

The Native Nebraska Pollinator Gardens serve as hands-on learning spaces for students, faculty, and community members, allowing us to teach the importance of native plants in maintaining healthy soils, supporting pollinators, and strengthening ecosystem resilience. These gardens also support a student-run sustainability club, which collects and sells native seeds to help fund educational activities and outreach efforts.

While Central Community College was fortunate to have additional resources to support other aspects of our waste diversion system, many schools and organizations across Nebraska do not have access to that level of funding. For these institutions, the Recycling Equipment Grant is often the only means of acquiring essential recycling and composting infrastructure. The flexibility of this grant allows applicants to address their most pressing needs, whether that be compost bins, recycling containers, or other equipment necessary to divert waste from landfills.

Without the composting infrastructure made possible through the Recycling Equipment Grant program, Central Community College would not be able to sustain this system or achieve the level of impact we currently see across multiple academic programs and student initiatives.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to continue funding the Recycling Equipment Grant, as this program has delivered measurable environmental, educational, and economic benefits to Central Community College.

Sincerely,

Alexa Armendariz

Environmental Sustainability Intern

Central Community College

ALEXA ARMENDARIZ

PT SUSTAINABILITY INTERN

alex95364@cccneb.edu |



www.cccneb.edu

550 S TECHNICAL BLVD | PO BOX 1024 | HASTINGS | NE, 68902

TOLL FREE 1.877.222.0780

Central Community College maximizes student and community success.

From: [John Hobbs](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Cc: [Kimberly Carroll Steward](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Monday, December 22, 2025 12:02:56 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

You don't often get email from john.hobbs@larmpool.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Nebraska Environmental Trust,

I am writing on behalf of the League Association of Risk Management (LARM) to express our strong support for the continued funding of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant program.

LARM provides insurance coverage to more than 250 public entities across Nebraska, including numerous municipalities and several solid waste disposal facilities. These waste management operations face the growing and persistent risk of lithium-ion battery fires on a near-daily basis. While many of these incidents result only in the consumption of staff time and resources, others cause significant property damage, as evidenced by the recent fire that destroyed a recycling trailer in Norfolk. To date, we have fortunately avoided catastrophic losses involving vehicles, buildings, or human life, but such outcomes remain a real and ongoing possibility.

The most effective strategy for mitigating these risks is to expand safe, convenient recycling options for lithium-ion batteries, thereby diverting them from the regular waste stream. In many smaller and rural Nebraska communities, however, such options remain limited or nonexistent. The NRC's Recycling Equipment Grant plays a critical role in addressing this gap by providing essential resources that enable local governments and facilities to establish and maintain dedicated battery recycling programs.

For these reasons, LARM strongly urges the restoration of funding for the Recycling Equipment Grant. Sustaining this program is a proactive investment in public safety, risk reduction, and environmental protection that directly benefits Nebraska's communities and the entities we insure.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information or perspective on the insurance and risk management implications of lithium-ion battery disposal.

Sincerely,

John Hobbs

John Hobbs, CPSI | League Association of Risk Management
Loss Control Specialist



1335 L Street Suite 200 | Lincoln NE 68508
(402) 742-2600 | www.larmpool.org

Cell Phone: (402) 840-2069

Email: john.hobbs@larmpool.org



League Association of Risk Management

Local · Stable · Reliable

From: [Benjamin Newton](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 10:13:44 AM

You don't often get email from benjaminnewton@cccneb.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am writing to you in regard to the Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146 that funded equipment which has included balers, forklifts, classroom recycling bins, trucks, and trailers. These are tools that make recycling possible and efficient while helping to improve equitable access for Nebraskans statewide.

Central Community College has benefited from acquiring composting bins for our cafeterias from this grant. We collect food waste daily in these bins on three Central Nebraska campuses, and it tremendously reduces our overall landfill waste and provides valuable soil to gardens on campus. Without this grant Central CC would not have been able to purchase the bins and also it provides an educational benefit through tours and to our students that know the value of composting on campus.

I hope you reconsider the value of the recycling equipment grant administered by the Nebraska Recycling Council to support small equipment projects in rural areas that do not have access to capital funds to support small recycling and composting projects.

Thanks for your consideration,

Ben

BENJAMIN NEWTON

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR
benjaminnewton@cccneb.edu | +1 308 398 7962



www.cccneb.edu

3134 W HIGHWAY 34 | PO BOX 4903 | GRAND ISLAND | NE, 68802

TOLL FREE 1.877.222.0780

Central Community College maximizes student and community success.

From: [Linda Barrett](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#); [Daniel Buller](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 4:50:18 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

You don't often get email from linda@crossroadsmission.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Please accept our input regarding the possible loss of funding for the NET recycle equipment grants.

Crossroads Mission Avenue has been privileged to receive Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) grants through the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) for many years now. This grant program has played a vital role in building the successful recycle program that Crossroads now employs – one which was recognized by the NRC with the 2024 Green Team of the Year Award. NET grants have helped Crossroads secure the equipment to build an infrastructure capable of recycling a wide variety of products, including metals, clothing and mixed rags, shoes, hard toys, stuffed animals, and accessories like belts, purses, bags, and hats. Our recycle program is helping to reduce the pollution caused by waste, saving more than 334,000 pounds of products annually from becoming waste to fill our landfills. As a part of our workforce development program, our recycle program provides our guests with job skills training, making them more valuable as they enter the Nebraska workforce. Revenue generated from our recycle program provides support for Crossroads as we carry out our mission to serve the homeless population in Central Nebraska. In essence, this program has come full circle, saving the state many times over the amount that they have given to build this recycling program. So, it was a win-win for the state, and we respectfully request that funding be allocated for this grant program to continue to serve our Nebraska communities.

Linda Barrett
Grant Development Director
linda@crossroadsmission.com
www.crossroadsmission.com
402.303.8594



From: [Dale Ekart](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Saturday, December 20, 2025 11:38:59 AM

You don't often get email from daleanna51@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

It is imperative that the Equipment Grants administered by the NRC be kept in place. These have been very instrumental in helping the recycling programs throughout the state. Please keep these going.

Dale Ekart

--

Dale/Anna Ekart
504 Redwood Circle
Berthoud, Co 80513
303-961-0619

From: [Madison Martinez](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 11:27:07 AM

You don't often get email from madimartinez51@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hi,

My name is Madison Martinez and I am a resident of Lincoln, NE and have been for years. As a student studying Environmental Studies at UNL, I have seen how grants have the ability of creating accessibility within our community. The Recycling Equipment Grants that you are proposing should not be recommended for funding have diverted over 1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material from our landfills. As someone who has toured the Lancaster County Landfill, I realized that every single piece of waste makes a difference. By recycling, we are investing back into Nebraska, especially for the next generation. I urge you to continue to fund the Recycling Equipment Grant, as it has supported more than 200 projects for more than 75 Nebraskan communities. Funding the grant shows that you care about everyday Nebraskans, like myself, and OUR future in Nebraska.

Thank you,
Madison

From: [Benjamin Benton](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-246" by 5:00 p.m. CT on December 26, 2025.
Date: Friday, December 19, 2025 5:15:12 PM

You don't often get email from bebento1@wsc.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Members of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board,

I am writing to express my strong support for continued funding of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant (REG), application #26-246, and to respectfully urge the Board to reconsider the current funding recommendation.

Nebraska consistently ranks near the bottom nationally for recycling and waste diversion. This low performance has tangible consequences. It limits Nebraska's ability to compete for federal recycling and materials-management funding and weakens the state's ability to attract private-sector investment, as many companies increasingly consider access to recycled materials and recycling infrastructure when making siting and expansion decisions.

The Nebraska Recycling Council Equipment Grant is one of the most effective tools Nebraska has to address these challenges statewide. REG supports recycling infrastructure across all 93 counties, serving nearly 500 municipal governments and countless for-profit businesses, nonprofits, schools, and institutions that depend on functional recycling systems. In many rural and smaller communities, this grant provides the only realistic path to establishing or maintaining recycling programs.

Since its inception, REG has helped divert more than 1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material from Nebraska landfills and has supported over 200 projects in more than 75 communities statewide. The equipment funded—such as balers, collection bins, forklifts, trucks, and trailers—is essential, long-term infrastructure. Recycling does not happen without equipment—and for many Nebraska communities, REG is the only path to obtaining it.

REG is also a highly cost-effective investment. It leverages local funding, staffing, and community commitment to generate durable environmental returns over many years. Few programs deliver this level of measurable, statewide impact with such efficient use of public funds.

If this grant is not funded, the Nebraska Recycling Council would no longer be able to offer Recycling Equipment Grants in future cycles. This would not simply pause progress—it would risk backsliding, as communities face aging equipment and fewer options to maintain existing recycling capacity. Once programs like REG are discontinued, rebuilding the capacity, partnerships, and momentum they create becomes far more costly and difficult than sustaining them. Rural communities would be disproportionately affected.

Increased recycling also produces broader environmental benefits by reducing landfill expansion, conserving energy and water, and lowering the environmental impacts associated with raw material extraction and disposal.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust is uniquely positioned to support this type of statewide recycling infrastructure. Funding REG directly advances NET's mission to conserve, enhance, and restore

Nebraska's natural environments while strengthening local capacity and improving Nebraska's long-term environmental and economic competitiveness.

Through my work with communities and organizations across Nebraska, I see firsthand how access to basic recycling equipment determines whether recycling is viable at all. The Recycling Equipment Grant delivers practical, proven results that benefit Nebraska's environment, economy, and communities.

I respectfully urge the Board to approve this application at a funding level sufficient to allow the Recycling Equipment Grant to continue operating statewide. Approving this grant is a practical, defensible, and impactful investment in Nebraska's environmental future.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued service to Nebraska's natural resources.

Benjamin Benton
Center Director
America's SBDC - Nebraska

Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC)
Wayne State College | Gardner Hall Room 101
1111 Main St | Wayne, NE 68787
O: 402.375.7575
C: 531.519.5648
bebento1@wsc.edu
nbdc.unomaha.edu



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[Click to schedule a web call meeting with me \(hold CTRL on keyboard to click\)](#)

From: [Roger Jaeger](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 9:09:23 PM

You don't often get email from roger.t.jaeger@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I implore of you to reinstitute the recycling equipment grant. We live in a throw-away society, and through recycling opportunities are the solution to the environmental disaster society has created. Grant programs like this allow the recycling industry to grow. Without this grant program current recyclers will lose out on upgrades that will capture more recyclable content and lessen the environmental burden on landfills and society as a whole. Our collective future is worth the price this program has now. Please do the right thing, for today and tomorrow's generations.

Respectfully,
Roger Jaeger
Bellevue, NE

From: [Suzanne Gates](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 8:19:59 PM

You don't often get email from suzannemgates@hotmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust,

As a board member of the Nebraska Recycling Council, I've witnessed the transformative impact of the Recycling Equipment Grant (REG). With a legacy predating the 2017 merger of the Nebraska State Recycling Association and WasteCap NE, REG has diverted over **1.4 billion pounds of recyclables** from Nebraska landfills.

Since then, REG has fueled more than **200 projects across 75+ communities**, equipping small towns, schools, businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and metropolitan areas with the tools—balers, forklifts, recycling bins, trucks, trailers—that make recycling possible and efficient statewide.

Without continued support from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, funding for future REG cycles will vanish, curbing recycling opportunities and eroding the economic and environmental gains Nebraska has worked so hard to achieve.

I humbly ask the Nebraska Environmental Trust to reconsider funding for this impactful program.

Best regards,

Suzanne Gates

NRC Board Member

From: [Danielle Easdale](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 10:32:19 AM

You don't often get email from danielleeasdale@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Members of the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board,

I am writing in strong support of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) and to respectfully urge the Board to reconsider the recommendation not to fund this program.

As the **Board President of the Nebraska Recycling Council**, I have had the opportunity to visit many REG recipients across the state and see firsthand how this equipment directly strengthens recycling systems in Nebraska communities. From rural towns to metropolitan areas, the balers, trucks, trailers, forklifts, and classroom collection systems funded through this program are not optional enhancements—they are foundational infrastructure that make recycling possible.

Beyond my role with NRC, I work in the recycling industry at **The Recycling Partnership**, and previously at **Firststar Fiber**, Nebraska's largest recycler. In those roles, I developed close relationships with communities across the state that rely on Recycling Equipment Grants to operate viable recycling programs. I have seen how the absence of this equipment leads directly to lost material, higher costs, and, ultimately, recyclable material being landfilled.

Since continuing under NRC, the Recycling Equipment Grant has:

- Helped divert **more than 1.4 billion pounds** of recyclable material from Nebraska landfills
- Supported **200+ projects** across **75+ communities statewide**
- Expanded equitable access to recycling for schools, nonprofits, businesses, local governments, and rural communities

The loss of this funding would have a significant and immediate impact—particularly on smaller and rural communities that do not have alternative or limited capital funding sources. Without REG, many of these programs will stagnate or disappear, undermining both the **environmental stewardship goals of the Nebraska Environmental Trust** and the **economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery** statewide.

The Recycling Equipment Grant is a proven, efficient investment with measurable outcomes that directly aligns with NET's mission to conserve, enhance, and restore Nebraska's natural environment. Few programs demonstrate such a clear connection between grant funding and long-term, statewide environmental benefit.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued service to Nebraska. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this perspective and respectfully request your support in continuing funding for the Recycling Equipment Grant.

Sincerely,

Danielle Easdale
Board President, Nebraska Recycling Council
Director Material Systems, The Recycling Partnership
Formerly, Firststar Fiber
danielleasdale@gmail.com
402-212-5773

From: [Adam Rhoads](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Cc: grants@nrcne.org
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-246
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 9:21:22 PM

You don't often get email from adamerhoads@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board,

I am writing today on behalf of Mystic Rhoads Productions Inc. to express our strong support for the Nebraska Recycling Council's (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) application (Grant ID: 26-246). We were deeply concerned to learn that this vital program was not initially recommended for funding, and we respectfully urge the Board to reconsider that recommendation and fully fund this grant.

At MRP, our work directly involves partnering with Nebraska schools to organize campus clean-ups, provide essential new waste containers, and implement other environmental conservation measures. We view the NRC's Recycling Equipment Grant as an indispensable community resource that directly enables these efforts.

The historical data of the REG program—diverting 1.4 billion pounds of waste and supporting over 200 projects—is impressive on a macro level. However, from our perspective, the impact is local and tangible.

For many schools, the barrier to starting or maintaining a recycling program isn't a lack of will; it is a lack of infrastructure. The grants provided through this program allow schools to acquire the basic tools that make recycling efficient and accessible for students and custodians.

If the NRC loses the funding to offer future Recycling Equipment Grants, our ability to assist schools will be severely diminished. We do not want to lose this valuable resource. Defunding this program will stall recycling momentum in educational settings across the state, missing a crucial opportunity to instill habits of environmental stewardship in the next generation of Nebraskans.

The REG program is a proven mechanism that directly advances the Nebraska Environmental Trust's mission to "conserve, enhance, and restore the natural environments of Nebraska." By funding the infrastructure necessary to keep materials out of our landfills, you are actively conserving resources and enhancing our communities.

We ask that you recognize the proven track record of this program and the negative ripple effect its termination would have on Nebraska schools and communities. Please ensure the continuation of the Recycling Equipment Grant.

Thank you for your time and your service to Nebraska's environment.

Sincerely,

Adam Rhoads
Commissioner
Mystic Rhoads Productions

From: [Patrick Leahy](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025 5:33:57 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

You don't often get email from pleahy@firststarfiber.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

First, I appreciate what the Nebraska Environmental Trust mission is and difficult job you have in executing it on an annual basis. I appreciate all the directors as you all do it with great dedication and discernment.

I am writing in both my personal and professional capacity to encourage the Trust to continue with Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grants. Over the years, I've seen how towns, schools, businesses, nonprofits, and other government agencies have benefited from this program. The difference between a successful recycling program and a failed one could be something simple as a small baler, forklifts, recycling bins, trucks, and trailers. These are tools that make recycling efficient while helping improve access for Nebraskans statewide.

If the Nebraska Environmental Trust ultimately denies the NRC equipment grant, more materials would end up in landfills across the state which is already a simmering crisis because as soon as those are full, what will be the financial and environmental cost to build more? And where?

Happy to provide more context and comments, as needed.



Thank you,

Patrick Leahy

CEO

Cell: 402-650-4464

10330 "I" Street, Suite 100 | Omaha,

NE

www.firststarrecycling.com

From: [Jennifer Proescholdt \(PWks\)](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 2:48:15 PM

You don't often get email from jennifer.proescholdt@cityofomaha.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

I am writing in testimony of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant.

This grant assisted Under the Sink (the City of Omaha's household hazardous waste facility) with the purchase of a new dump trailer. We use this trailer to transport drums of bad water-based paint to be processed and disposed of. Our previous trailer was a single axle and rusting in spots. The new trailer is a double axle that has a larger gross vehicle weight rating than the old one and allows us to transport drums more efficiently and safely.

Water-based paint makes up the greatest portion of waste that we receive from our community. Under the Sink serves Douglas and Sarpy County – a population of over 750,000 people. In 2024, we transported 21,670 gallons of paint in 394 drums. We're on target for about the same amount for 2025.

The NRC's Recycling Equipment Grant is a boon to Nebraska communities both large and small. Thank you for your time.

--

Jennifer Proescholdt
Household Hazardous Waste Supervisor
UnderTheSink HHW Collection Facility
City of Omaha - Environmental Quality Control Division
402.444.7551 (office)
402.330.5542 (fax)

From: theolivettis@aol.com
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: NET and funding for NRC's Recycling Equipment Grant (REG)
Date: Friday, December 19, 2025 10:00:29 AM

You don't often get email from theolivettis@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To Whom it May Concern,

I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to no longer continue funding this grant as you know the impact it will have to Nebraska's small and large communities and municipalities.

So many have benefited from this grant in the past and present, and without your funding this grant you are cutting off the work you helped support NRC in making recycling possible and efficient in areas that would not have the support otherwise.

As Nebraskans, we are far behind many states in addressing and supporting environmental issues.

We all need to support and help others who have a lack in funding or support they need. We also are all part of the fabric of this state of Nebraska - which means we need to support, and educate others to recycle, reuse, conserve, and have the resources they need to protect our environment.

Please reconsider by funding this grant, and continue to support NRC in their mission which is congruent with yours.

Thanks for your consideration,
Judi Olivetti

From: [Bailey Klanderud](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146
Date: Tuesday, December 23, 2025 8:00:20 AM

Hello,

I writing in support of the Nebraska Recycling Council and their Recycling Equipment Grant.

This grant is essential to continue making Nebraska a cleaner and safer place for all people to live. As a Nebraskan myself, the state relies on the efforts of community nonprofits and efforts from the Nebraska Recycling Council. This grant allows for essential resource recovery to continue, this equipment not only creates a positive environmental impact for the state, but also improves the economic impact on the state. This allows us to make new life out of old materials and reduce the need for new materials.

Finally, nature is essential to Nebraska and this grant helps protect and conserve the natural lands in Nebraska. Without this grant, the natural areas will suffer and impact young children who rely on parks, older adults who rely on walking paths, and workers who rely on clean and healthy lands in Nebraska.

Thank you for your consideration and I hope this grant can be funded due to the immediate impact it can have on the environment, especially in Nebraska!

Best,
Bailey Klanderud
Omaha, NE 68007



December 26, 2025

The Nebraska Environmental Trust Board of Directors
2077 N Street, Suite 310,
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

Dear Members,

As a past recipient of Nebraska Environmental Trust grants and an active organization in Nebraska's environmental sustainability objectives, my board of directors, and I come to you to request the board to engage in serious re-evaluation on the granting processes and give the people of this state some transparency in your objectives.

When I attended one of your meeting last year to defend my grant, this board, under the previous director voted not to give additional priority points in grant evaluation to water and water conservation projects. Yet, the current list of projects being funded contains mostly water projects.

THE TRUST DID NOT FUND ONE RECYCLING grant! NOT ONE. As a Keep America Beautiful affiliate and national leader, our organization is concerned that not funding small non-profits, such as the Nebraska Recycling Council, and granting the dollars to other state agencies such as Nebraska Game and Parks Water projects (\$1.2 million) or NRD projects (1.0 million) or rainwater projects (1.9 million) or weeds (1.7 million) is not what was intended for the mission. There has always been a balance of various types of grants. Now it is very specific- no funding for any recycling efforts. One village of 430 people received a grant for over \$400,000.00.

This state has worked hard to create rural recycling projects through non-profits specifically in Western Nebraska, where we work, in our hub and spoke programs that have been operating since 2016. Nebraska's environmental field is led by the NRC and their director in their various programs including legislation, leadership and business opportunities. But, instead of helping the small nonprofit groups, the Trust granted a private business in Omaha \$600,000.00 to send people into our already established programs to seek their collected material instead of using our established system and undermine our work.

When 2.3 million dollars of Trust funding is granted to National organizations (Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever) and nothing is given to the Nebraska Recycling Council, red flags go up! There should also be no conflict of interest on these boards, as they are appointed by the governor, but I find it interesting that one agency receiving 1.2 million dollars has its director on the grants committee. And another on the grants committee getting 1 million plus. Please don't think we are suggesting any impropriety, we are just troubled by a few people managing grants their benefit their paid government directorships.



The Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) is a leader throughout the whole state. NRC funds the small, under \$20K, towns, recycling centers, and schools to build their own infrastructure and systems. The NRC has assisted and built with us all across the state a network of engaged professionals, working to build sustainable operations. They have developed tool kits to offer institutional education, connected new and developing technologies and assisted State Senator Jana Hughes in the passage of legislation to prohibit the use of unsafe lithium battery collection systems. The NRC is an essential tool in the outcomes of sustainable education and equipment for everyone. They don't pick favorites or pet projects.

There needs to be an answer to the people of this state as to why the grants committee, with sitting agency directors, and a grants chair who works in Iowa, have not funded legacy programs and projects, yet they fund programs in their own agencies. Other sustainability leaders are also very concerned about the manner in which the funding has been delineated and nothing has been granted to long-standing exemplary programs. To top it off, there is no appeal process.

There are many of us in the non-profit environmental sustainability world that realize cash is tight, the governor is seeking funding to overcome the deficit and taking some cash reserves from various agencies and we are prepared to deal with shortfalls and funding issues. But taking the funding from truly exceptional programs and having no recourse is wrong.

The objectives of the Trust are clearly stated, yet somewhat ambiguous. One of the items in your mission is: *The Trust is to lead in the development of a vision of Nebraska's future environment.* If the future is for pheasant and quail to have habitat, great, but if the trust is seeking to lead in development, it seems the development only included pet projects, national groups and recycling and small communities are again left out.

Please reconsider your grant process and how it needs to represent all of environmental sustainability not just water, weeds and national groups.

Sincerely,

Christine Vail

Christine Vail
Executive Director
Keep Keith County Beautiful
CD3 Commissioner- Nebraska 250

cc: Governor Jim Pillen
Senator Tom Brandt
Senator Jana Hughes

cc: Senator Barry DeKay
L.A. Matthew Howe
Senator Paul Stromme
Kimberly Stewart, NRC
Bob Verkuilen, KNB



December 23, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska (CSS) appreciates the opportunity to share how Recycling Equipment Grants administered by the Nebraska Recycling Council have strengthened our environmental stewardship efforts at our Lincoln operations. This support has directly contributed to increased waste diversion, improved resource efficiency, and safer, more sustainable material handling practices.

Through grant funding, CSS acquired essential recycling and material-handling equipment, including a clothes and cardboard baler, an order selector forklift, collapsible plastic gaylords, and community clothing donation bins. These investments have improved our ability to recover and reuse donated materials that would otherwise enter the waste stream.

The collapsible plastic gaylords have significantly improved the efficient movement of bulk donated clothing through our Donation Center. By safely transporting 350–500 pounds per container from intake to sorting and baling, CSS has reduced unnecessary handling and increased the volume of textiles diverted from landfill disposal.

The baler has become central to our textile recycling operation. By baling and selling donated clothing to national textile recyclers, CSS ensures these materials are repurposed rather than discarded. Since initiating baling operations in Lincoln in 2020, CSS has diverted approximately **1.4 million pounds of textiles** from landfills, reducing disposal volume while extending the useful life of these materials.

Grant funding also enabled CSS to expand convenient community-based clothing donation access through strategically placed collection bins. Since installing the first bin in June 2023, CSS has collected nearly **27,000 pounds of textiles**, and additional bins are expected to significantly increase annual diversion totals.

While CSS represents one organization within Nebraska's broader recycling landscape, these grants have enabled measurable environmental benefits through waste reduction, material recovery, and responsible resource management. Our partnership with the Nebraska Recycling Council has strengthened our commitment to environmental stewardship and aligns with the shared goal of reducing landfill impact across the state.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Respectfully,

Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska



DOUGLAS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

15335 West Maple Road, Suite 201

Omaha, NE 68116

www.dceservices.org

(402) 444-6181

Kent E. Holm, Director

December 23, 2025

Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) - via email

RE: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146

Dear NET Directors:

I am writing to urge your support for the Nebraska Recycling Council's (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146, which proposes using NET pass-through funds to provide communities and other entities with end-of-life battery collection containers.

During the last legislative session, the Nebraska Unicameral, led by Senator Jana Hughes, demonstrated the severity of lithium-ion battery mismanagement and its escalating public safety risks by passing LB36, the Safe Battery Collection and Recycling Act. While the Act is a significant step in addressing the issue, it will not be fully implemented until January 2028. In the interim, battery-related fires—and the associated costs to Nebraska taxpayers for fire department responses, and the loss of equipment and infrastructure to individuals and businesses—will continue.

The NRC's grant request is an immediate measure to address end-of-life battery mismanagement. By funding this grant, you will help mitigate current public safety issues and simultaneously accelerate the development of the collection network necessary for the successful implementation of the Safe Battery Collection and Recycling Act in January 2028.

It is my understanding that the NET is currently recommending against funding the NRC's request. This is a short-sighted position. Providing safe collection options now is an investment that will save taxpayer money by preventing costly fire incidents.

Please support the NRC in their essential work to address the growing public safety challenge posed by mismanaged end-of-life batteries by fully funding their Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kent E. Holm, Director



Cornhusker Chapter

Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET)

RE: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146

Dear NET Directors:

The Nebraska Cornhusker Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) promotes the sustainable management of solid waste in the State of Nebraska and supports the Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) in their similar efforts. A key resource that NRC provides are the pass through funds for equipment to municipalities, schools, businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies. The vast majority of these grants help these entities purchase equipment that makes recycling possible and efficient and contributes to the Nebraska economy.

It has come to our attention that the NET has recommended that the current NRC Recycling Equipment Grant (26-146) not be funded. As you may be aware, the NRC Grant application also requests NET money for recycling "supplies" in addition to recycling "equipment" as part of the NRC program. The key recycling "supplies" to be provided are battery collection boxes. These battery boxes allow for the safe collection and recycling of used batteries, preventing hazardous materials (like heavy metals) from polluting landfills, reducing fire risks (especially with lithium-ion), conserving natural resources by recovering valuable metals, and complying with environmental laws. Improper end of life management of batteries is a critical public safety issue and is the primary reason that LB36, the Safe Battery Collection and Recycling Act, was passed by the Legislature and signed into law this past May. Battery fires are occurring on an almost daily basis and while the Law fully implements in January 2028, we need to act now. The NRC program, if funded, will provide battery collection boxes to entities across the state, to help mitigate these fire events.

Very simply, the NRC is asking NET to fund this equipment grant request to address this critical public safety issue. On behalf of the Nebraska Chapter of SWANA I urge you to recommend funding of the NRC's equipment grant application.

Sincerely,

Jeff Selden, President

Sanitation Division
City of Kearney
3007 East 39th Street
P. O. Box 1180
Kearney, NE 68848-1180



TELEPHONE · (308) 233-3208
FAX · (308) 233-3288
E-MAIL · spetzold@kearneygov.org
WEBSITE · www.cityofkearney.org

December 23, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter to speak on behalf of the Nebraska Recycling Council. We have recently been made aware that the Nebraska Recycling Council will not be recommended for funding for the Recycling Equipment Grant.

This grant has been very important and beneficial to many entities in Nebraska. The City of Kearney has utilized this specific grant through the years to purchase equipment to make our program safer and more efficient. While this grant has helped our program to grow and be successful, it has also been vital to smaller communities to help their recycling programs. We have had these surrounding communities contact our office at the Kearney Area Recycling Center regarding recycling equipment and the Recycling Equipment Grant has been a good resource to recommend to these groups.

I feel that denying funding for the Recycling Equipment Grant will have a negative impact on many recycling programs throughout the state of Nebraska and urge you to reconsider.

Sincerely yours,

CITY OF KEARNEY

From: [Pamela Pacheco](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: ABC Recycling support for Nebraska Recycling Council
Date: Friday, December 26, 2025 4:34:13 PM

You don't often get email from pamela@abcrecyclingco.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Greetings:

I want to send my support of Nebraska Recycling Council continuing to obtain equipment grants, oversee and distribute the grants. I have owned and operated a recycling sorting and consolidation business since 2004. I have supported both residential, commercial and agricultural recycling. I spent the first 10 years starting a recycling center in Denver CO. I moved my business to North Platte NE in 2013 where I have continued to operate and grow the business under the name All Business & Commercial Recycling (dba ABC Recycling).

Over the years we have reached out to NRC for several equipment grants that have been instrumental in ensuring our continued business growth. The two that I wanted to talk about that were very helpful and to be honest I don't know if we would have survived if we hadn't had the NRC as an equipment grant option:

- 1) One of the grants was around 2015-2016 when our 2500 truck went down and we needed a truck to replace it to use with our gooseneck trailers to pickup recyclables from our clients. At the time we were using the truck for about 50% of our client pickups.
- 2) The second grant was in 2021 when our Rear-Loader Packer caught fire and we needed to get another used one immediately. At the time we were collecting about 200,000 lbs monthly of loose cardboard from business clients in the North Platte area. Because we were able to reach out to NRC which as a business you are able to submit a grant application each month, we were able to get back up and running in 5 weeks. Since 2021 we have almost doubled our loose cardboard generation.

I want to also note, having an entity like NRC who is able to accept monthly equipment grant applications is instrumental for businesses who have unexpected equipment issues and need immediate resolutions. By only having grants available to apply for only yearly like NET and NDEE and where you have to wait for another 5 months to find out if you have received the grant does not help these very critical situations.

I know for us we most likely would not be here today, if it was not for equipment grants from NRC, NET and NDEE. Thank you for all your support.

Saving our Earth...together

Plastics....Cardboard/Paper....Document Shredding....Electronics....Metals....Cleanouts

Best Regards,

Pamela Pacheco

Principal

All Business & Commercial Recycling (ABC Recycling)

300 W. 7th Street (site location)

PO Box 1478 (mailing)

North Platte, NE 69101

303.905.7709 (cell)

From: [Gene Hanlon](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146
Date: Thursday, December 25, 2025 12:38:38 PM

You don't often get email from gene.hanlon@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

NET Board,

I am writing to ask that you reevaluate your ranking for the Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grant. I served as the City of Lincoln's Recycling Coordinator for over 30 years and am well aware of the value of the Recycling Equipment Grant Program to the State of Nebraska. NRC staff devote a significant amount of staff time ensuring that grant recipients acquire and install the equipment properly and document the amount of material diverted from disposal. In my opinion, NET staff do not have the time to respond to community questions, ensure the proper installation of equipment and track the volume of material recycled as a result of using the equipment.

NRC has provided equipment to a variety of communities across the state. From Metropolitan areas such as Lincoln to a small village. The equipment provided to these communities has extended the life of their local landfills by diverting over 1.4 million pounds of recyclables. The NRC Recycling Equipment Grant program saves NET money by allowing staff to focus their attention on other meaningful environmental programs.

Please take the time to reevaluate the NRC ranking and provide funding so this worthwhile program could continue.

Gene Hanlon
2710 Ryons St
Lincoln, NE 68502

From: [Madeline Ferber \(PWks\)](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Tuesday, December 23, 2025 3:13:42 PM

You don't often get email from madeline.ferber@cityofomaha.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust Board and Staff,

This past week I learned that the Nebraska Recycling Council may not be approved for funding for their recycling equipment grant program.

As a former staff member of NRC, I had the firsthand opportunity to see just how impactful this program has been in communities across our state. Whether it was performing site visits, meeting with municipalities, or talking to residents, it was clear that this program stood out as the single MOST impactful program NRC is able to offer. Not to discount the other amazing work they do, but this grant program allows a direct impact on communities in ways that no other program can achieve when it comes to advancing recycling in our state.

In my current role as Recycling Coordinator for the City of Omaha, I have had the chance to experience the power of changing a recycling program for the better through grant funding. For example, in 2021 the City of Omaha received a Recycling Equipment Grant for the purchase of 2 glass recycling containers. Because our curbside program is single stream, we are unable to accept glass curbside, and can only accept it at our drop off locations. Each of our 8 drop-offs across the city have 1 glass recycling container. Managing our glass in this way creates both a financial and environmental benefit. Glass recycling is our cheapest material stream, costing the city roughly \$40 per ton, vs the \$140 per ton to landfill. In 2024 our residents recycled a total of 1,600 tons of glass alone. The 2 glass containers funded by this program created capacity for 400 out of those 1,600 tons. Per the EPA's WARM Model, recycling this material rather than landfilling reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 118 metric tons of CO2. This is just one tiny snapshot of the impact created by this program.

In my opinion and experience, not funding this grant would be a mistake that would negatively impact recycling programs across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and happy holidays!

--

Madeline Ferber
Recycling Coordinator
City of Omaha
5600 S 10th St
Omaha, NE 68107-3501
402-444-3915 ext. 1140



From: [Haley Nolde](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Friday, December 26, 2025 12:08:15 PM

You don't often get email from haleymnolde@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

NET Board,

I am reaching out in support of the Nebraska Recycling Council. I was employed by NRC for five years, two as Executive Director. I have met countless grant recipients and know just how important they are to our communities. Without this funding, the cost of waste management increases and often becomes a burden to taxpayers. This equipment facilitates the diversion of significant amounts of material from Nebraska landfills; they protect our air and water quality and keep valuable material in the economy. The grant has been managed efficiently and responsibly by NRC for many years.

I ask that you reconsider the Recycling Equipment Grant application and recommend it to be funded.

Thank you for all that you do for our state.

Sincerely,

--

Haley Nolde
Sustainability Coordinator Graduate Assistant
University of South Dakota
(308) 280-8900
[LinkedIn](#)

From: [Jesse Starita](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Tuesday, December 23, 2025 10:31:01 AM

You don't often get email from jesse.starita@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust,

Landfills across Nebraska receive enough material to fill every seat at Memorial Stadium – every day. While that’s staggering, consider this: without the Nebraska Recycling Council’s Recycling Equipment Grants, that amount would fill the seats at Memorial Stadium and very likely those at Pinnacle Bank Arena and the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The reason is simple. Since 2017, Recycling Equipment Grants have helped divert more than 1.4 billion pounds of recyclable material from Nebraska’s landfills. Behind each of those pounds is a story – and here are a few. Central Community College’s new compost bins have expanded composting on all three campuses. In Fremont, Habitat for Humanity’s new truck enables them to drive greater distances and help even more Nebraskans recycle. And literally in NET’s backyard, the Lincoln Bike Kitchen’s large trailer collects and transports the bikes they refurbish and give away for free.

Those are among the more than 200 projects – across more than 75 Nebraska communities – that this vital grant has brought to life. That’s why I urge you to continue funding Recycling Equipment Grants. With your support, the Nebraska Recycling Council can continue to build Nebraska’s recycling infrastructure by creating, expanding, or enhancing recycling programs. With your support, the Nebraska Recycling Council can work toward a future where, on game days, the only thing filling Memorial Stadium is the roar of a sellout crowd.

Thank you,
Jesse Starita

From: [RJ Hamilton](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Friday, December 26, 2025 10:35:05 AM

You don't often get email from recyclingcenterinc@hotmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued funding of the Nebraska Recycling Council (NRC) Recycling Equipment Grant (REG) Program. This long-standing grant, supported by the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), has played a critical role in advancing recycling efforts across Nebraska by providing essential equipment funding that enables communities and operators to maintain, improve, and expand recycling services.

Over the years, this program has proven to be one of the most effective tools available for strengthening recycling in Nebraska. The targeted awards offered throughout the year—paired with required matching funds—create meaningful, real-world impact. These grants bridge the gap between intent and implementation, allowing recycling programs to move forward when capital limitations would otherwise slow or halt progress.

Looking ahead, I believe this grant program will be more important than ever. In Southeast Nebraska specifically, communities are actively exploring ways to expand recycling access and reinforce local recycling infrastructure. Equipment funding through NRC and NET directly supports these needs by addressing practical operational challenges—investments that translate into increased diversion, improved efficiency, and long-term program sustainability.

The Nebraska Recycling Council has consistently demonstrated responsible stewardship, strong program management, and a comprehensive understanding of Nebraska's recycling landscape. Continued support for this program will help sustain existing recycling operations while fostering new opportunities for growth, collaboration, and innovation across the state.

As a review committee member, I also welcome any feedback or recommendations NET may have to further strengthen this program and ensure it continues delivering the outcomes and accountability expected of NET-funded initiatives. NRC has always been responsive to guidance, and we are committed to making any improvements necessary to maintain this program's strong alignment with NET's mission.

For these reasons, I strongly recommend continued funding of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant Program. Its impact is measurable, its need is clear, and its value to Nebraska's recycling future cannot be overstated.

Sincerely,
RJ Hamilton

From: [Travis Hassebrook](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Saturday, December 27, 2025 7:17:09 AM

You don't often get email from midwestsoilogix@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to my support of Nebraska Recycling Council receiving the full amount of their annual grant request for 2026 and forward. I own a small business here in Nebraska, centered around composting and landfill organic waste mitigation.

Nebraska is a state with a deep familiarity of being "stewards of the land" through our rich history in agriculture. To me though, that extends well beyond the fence rows and well beyond today. It means doing our part to make sure we leave future generations with a world that's in the best shape we can leave it moving forward. That includes recycling.

Landfills are always going to be a part of life, some waste simply has no usable life left with our current way of doing things, which means the piles will only get bigger. What we are responsible for is making sure they don't grow any faster than they absolutely have to. That's where recycling comes in. Recycling is an intensive process that requires capital and with a small capital injection from this grant, it allows smaller producers, like myself, the ability to grow our impact substantially.

Our company has used the Recycling Equipment Grant twice in the last 5 years to grow. The first was to expand the size of our windrowing operation so more organic waste could be processed in a year. The second was to purchase a piece of screening equipment to reduce the man-hours required to keep non-organic waste out of customers fields. By expanding our operation size and then speeding up the process, we've been able to make nearly a 200% increase in the amount of processed material, resulting in thousands of tons of methane that will not be emitted from a landfill and thousands of yards of space not taken up by organic waste that still has a usable life. This was only possible through the use of the Nebraska Equipment Grant to help with down payments. Something as simple as a small cash injection into businesses doing what they can to help our future, can have a lasting impact for generations. At first glance, its a small impact. Its a little bit of space in a landfill, but that space we would never get back. Then, when you step back and see all of the awardees of this grand working together in a big picture, you can see that we are making massive differences in sustainability for our kids and grandkids.

Taking away funding for the Nebraska Recycling Council, to me, is our state turning a blind eye to our future and saying "little changes don't matter." When, in-fact, the little changes are what make big changes possible.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to voice my support for what the Nebraska Recycling Council does and your consideration for funding moving forward.

Travis Hassebrook

--

Travis Hassebrook

Midwest Soilogix

Mailing:

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Humphrey, NE 68642

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MidwestSoilogix@GMail.com

From: [Kim Slezak](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Friday, December 26, 2025 3:54:40 PM

You don't often get email from kim@trees2products.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To the Nebraska Environmental Trust

I'm writing in support of the Nebraska Recycling Council's grant application. We received one of the monthly grants in November 2019, as did a companion grant application from the City of Geneva. In tandem the grant funds built a glass bunker at the City's Tree Dump, expanding their capability in the recycling program allowing Hoarty Recycling to include glass in their service. Our grant was for a grapple trailer in which we placed IBC totes not only for Molcajete Restaurant and Overtime Grill and Lounge in the city but in Utica and Exeter.

After a slow start due to COVID, thru the end of 2024 we aided in the recycling of 16 tons of glass. We also kept over 4.5 tons of pallets from the burn pile from 2 businesses in Geneva and over 25 tons of tree logs put into the supply chain rather than a waste pile where they would have been burned.

We have continued the glass collection route of Utica, Exeter and Geneva, the pallet pick ups, and tree logs whenever we find them or they are made known to us. Since reporting ended I have not been as good at keeping the weight of each load the grapple trailer picks up, but of the loads I did write down this year we had another 4.1 tons of glass, and 1/2 a ton each of pallets and trees.

The plans to continue growing the glass route were sidestepped at the end of 2021, when I started working full time for the Nebraska Forest Service. But none of the glass recycling in Fillmore County and neighboring communities would have occurred without our grant from the Nebraska Recycling Council affording us the opportunity to get the grapple that was attached to our match - the trailer.

The Village of Milligan recently decided to end collection of materials and we purchased the trailer and will be setting up recycling for the area from our farm. We had anticipated applying for another grant to get the skidsteer's engine replaced and a baler for the plastics and paper. My husband has been in touch with Quincy Recycle which requires the material be baled.

I'm sure the total impact of the grant funds that you were to award the Nebraska Recycling Council has and will continue to be multiplied exponentially by the good work and multiple impacts of all the equipment recipients statewide.

Please continue to fund the Nebraska Recycling Council through a grant award.

Respectfully,

Kim and Gerald Slezak

Trees2Products

Slezak Ag and Natural Resources

Milligan

From: [Anna Oetting](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Nebraska Recycling Council, Recycling Equipment Grant: 26-146
Date: Wednesday, December 24, 2025 1:01:27 PM

You don't often get email from oetting.anna@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Nebraska Environmental Trust,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued funding of the Nebraska Recycling Council's Recycling Equipment Grant.

Over the past 5 years, I have worked on sustainability efforts in both university and municipal settings, supporting resilience-building within the Lincoln community. A significant part of this work has involved increasing awareness and improving the proper management of waste. The Nebraska Recycling Council has played a critical role in building both understanding of and access to effective waste management practices across the state.

The Recycling Equipment Grant, in particular, has provided tremendous support to communities throughout Nebraska. It is a unique funding opportunity that allows a wide range of entities to participate—whether small and rural municipalities, organizations helping employees properly divert waste or investing in equipment to expand Nebraska's waste management infrastructure, or universities and students advancing recycling efforts. The grant supports both large and small entities in ways that work for their specific needs, while also contributing to economic development and community support across the state.

The Recycling Equipment Grant plays an important role in enabling Nebraskans to invest in meaningful and lasting waste management improvements, which are crucial to protecting the future of our communities and environment.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Nebraska and for considering the importance of sustaining this valuable program.

Best,

Anna Oetting

From: [kdjeffers](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: NRC support for NRC equipment grant in the future
Date: Wednesday, December 24, 2025 8:49:05 AM

You don't often get email from kdjeffers@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

December 20,2025

Board members & interested persons,

As a member of Omaha's Church Faithwestwood United Methodist Sustainability of Creation we're discouraged to hear that Nebraska Recycling Council equipment grants may not be offered in the future.

Our committee began to research the education we needed for equipment recycling program 2 years before the grant acceptance in 2018 for our goal to care for God's creation with economical & environmental benefits of resource recovery. Our large building needed 5 stations with clearly labeled bins for sorting each item. With over 800 members we have many food events each day of week to recycle. We received our NRC equipment grant in 2020 to turn more waste into resources that reduce landfill costs using a 4 stream system.

These funds made it possible to begin with grant of NRC equipment bins with signage to be easily recognizable which reduced our landfill costs by 70% which is documented with monthly audits.

When we began composting our on site garden for Food Pantry which uses the our processed food waste returned to our church to amend the garden to grow 2,350 pounds of vegetables each year to be shared visiting patrons 3 times monthly was enthusiastically welcomed.

Our members have been grateful for the advantages of participating and being mindful of our responsibilities to what we that can to reduce by recycling with NRC leadership and funding for others too.. Please include this as my witness at presentation in January 2026.

Sincerely,
Kathy Jeffers
Sustaining Committee

From: [Cottie Mills](#)
To: [Environmental Trust](#)
Subject: Support for Recycling Equipment Grant 26-146 / Nebraska Recycling Council
Date: Monday, December 29, 2025 8:00:44 AM

You don't often get email from cottiemills@tire-recyclers.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To the Nebraska Environmental Trust,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Recycling Equipment Grant (26-146). I understand the formal comment deadline was December 26th, but I wanted to make sure my voice was heard regarding the importance of this funding.

As someone currently working toward launching a non-profit focused on environmental efforts here in Nebraska, I see firsthand how much we need reliable recycling infrastructure. Cutting these grants would be a major step backward for our state's waste management goals.

Please consider the long-term impact that equipment funding has on local businesses and future charitable organizations trying to keep Nebraska clean. I hope the Trust continues to prioritize these investments.

Best regards,

Cottie Mills