GRANT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

I. General Instructions

We know that you put a lot of work into developing your proposal. The following instructions are designed to help you get the best result from your effort. All your work is worthless if reviewers can't find or understand your materials.

You will need to submit one complete application available on-line at https://environmentaltrustgrants.org. The first time you use this system you will need to register. Click on "Create Account". Once you complete the information click "Register". You will receive an email with a link to sign in and begin the application process.

A complete application has the following components. An incomplete application cannot be submitted.

- Cover Sheet
- Narrative
- Financial Information
- Budget (includes Partners)
- Timeline
- Real Estate

All attachments must be added as pdf files.

When your application is submitted, the Current Status of your application will change to "Submitted". You will receive an email confirming you have successfully submitted your application followed by a letter of confirmation mid-September. **NET staff will NOT send a separate confirmation**. We happily accept applications before the deadline date.

As you compile your application, be mindful that reviewers (who know nothing of your project) will be reading your application along with more than 100 other proposals. The cover sheet and budget forms are probably referenced more than any other portion of your application. If they are clear, and prepared as directed, your proposal will have the best possible opportunity to be understood and funded.

Letters of endorsement are not encouraged. Letters confirming participation of all partners are required. All partners must be confirmed at the time of application submission. See instructions for the "Partners" section.

The Trust reserves the right to request additional information, as it deems appropriate. You will be given reasonable time to respond. Failure to provide requested information may cause your application to be declared ineligible.

The provision of false or misleading information will disqualify your application. The discovery of false or misleading information will result in a grant being revoked, and repayment of any funds issued. If your application is approved for funding, information provided in the application is a binding attachment to your grant contract.

The following instructions will guide you sequentially through the materials you need to assemble for a completed application. You are encouraged to read the "Standards of Evaluation" before you begin. The standards describe features the Trust seeks in projects, and these are the features you should emphasize as you design your application. Good luck.

II. Application Components **https://environmentaltrustgrants.org**

The ribbon at the top of the screen provides a link to the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) webpage and contact information for the NET staff, a list of your application(s), and help. Below that ribbon your Project Sponsor Name, Project Name, the number of the application from your records and the Total Amount Requested will be visible throughout the process. "**Total Amount Requested" will be automatically populated as you develop the Budget section and will reflect the total amount you are requesting from NET. You cannot put a number here.**

There are six tabs explained in A - F below, that provide information on completing each section. Each section of the application has a direct link to the corresponding section of these instructions

A. Cover Sheet
B. Budget
C. Real Estate
D. Timeline
E. Attachments
F. Submit

A. Cover Sheet. The "Cover Sheet" is the first page of your application. Line by line instructions follow.

<u>1. Project Sponsor.</u> The "Sponsor" is the person(s) or organization(s) who will carry out the project. When more than one person or organization is sponsoring a project, please list the lead entity first. "Project Sponsor Short Name" is an abbreviation to be used on the Budget Sheets.

- ***What is the difference between a project sponsor and a project partner?***

A sponsor is accountable for the successful execution of a project. A partner contributes resources, but is not necessarily responsible for the implementation of the project.

<u>2. Project Name</u>. Please keep the project name to one line. If you are submitting applications for more than one project, it is useful to create titles that are clearly distinct. For example, don't name one project, "Prairie Habitat" and another "Prairie Preservation."

<u>3. Counties</u>. Select the county or counties where the project will be implemented. "Statewide" is a valid response in this item.

<u>4. Nearest Town</u> - The location of the nearest town will help us arrange site visits, if appropriate. Some projects may not have a physical location. We recommend you identify the community where the project administrator is based.

5. Sponsor web site. Sponsor organizations web site address.

6. Continuation or Resubmission. Select yes or no for each question as appropriate.

7. Sponsor category. Select the appropriate option. If you select "other", please provide a description.

8. Federal and state permits and funding. These questions provide important information to determine eligibility. If "Yes" Please provide details.

9. **200** Word Summary. It is important that your overview be brief; yet give a clear description of the project. It should summarize the key activities you wish to undertake, and outcomes you hope to achieve. ***The summary must be 200 words or less***. This summary will be used to describe your project in Trust publications.

Narrative. **In 1,200 words** provide a discussion of your project. Be sure to cover the following points:

- Describe in detail the design of the project, how it will be implemented, and what objectives will be achieved. Emphasize especially the environmental objectives, benefits and outcomes. Tell who will benefit from this project and how. Describe the economic, social and/or public health impacts this project will have. See the application ratings scale in the Standards of Evaluation document for other factors considered by the board when evaluating grant proposals.

- Highlight innovative features and preventive components of the project. What measures have been or will be taken to maximize cost-effectiveness? Who is contributing to this project: in what ways? Describe how you will measure the outcomes and evaluate your success.

- If the project will require continuing maintenance and/or administration, discuss how these costs will be funded and how this responsibility will be assured.

- Provide a list of federal and state permits or approvals this project will require. Describe the status of these permit applications.

- Pertinent photos and graphs can be added as a pdf attachment below your narrative or in Section E. Attachments and will not be counted within the 1,200 word narrative.

Financial Documents. Instructions for Project Sponsor Financial Information. Last in the "Cover Sheet" tab attach a pdf file with the appropriate information as stated below. The Trust reserves the right to request any additional information at its discretion.

Government agencies: list source(s) of income available, current revenue, appropriation and/or current levy and levy limit (if applicable). Provide current annual budget summary.

Private not-for-profit organizations: provide operating budget for the current year and most recent Form 990 Tax Return.

Private for-profit organizations: provide operating budget for the current year, and most recent profit/loss statement.

Individual: applicants may be asked to supply information at the discretion of the Trust.

- ***More than one organization is sponsoring this project. Do we file a statement for each organization? Is a statement required for every contributor to the project?***

This information is not required for every donor or contributor to the project.

Primary Contact Information. Provide information here for the individual who is best informed about this application, can answer questions that may arise and provide additional information which the Trust may request during the review period. Please include information so that we may reach this individual directly.

Signer's Contact Information. An authorized agent of the sponsor must sign the certification of the original copy of the cover sheet. The authorized agent should be the President or Director/Manager of your organization. **The signature page will be available to print, sign, and scan when all sections of the application are completed.** If the Primary Contact and Signer are one and the same, choose "Copy from Primary Contact".

B. The Budget Click on the "Budget" tab. Click on "Budget Details". Indicate how many years of funding and/or the time needed to complete the project you are requesting. The Trust can fund a project for a maximum of three years per application award. Budget sheets will become available for the number of years you indicate here AFTER you have saved this page and begin filling in Categories. Provide information for each of the three questions. You can add second and third year later and additional budget pages will become available.

Categories. Click "Manage Categories" then "Add" to identify budget categories for the project work, the basis used to determine costs, and attach any supporting documentation or bids as appropriate. For example, a lake project might have engineering, sediment removal, bank stabilization and fish restocking as budget categories. A recycling project might have a trailer purchase, extra bins, maintenance, and transportation budget categories. Place each category in a separate row.

This will automatically populate the first column of the Budget for each year of your grant. Click "Save" to go back to the main "Budget" tab.

- ***How specific should these categories be?***

This is a matter of judgment. Too many categories will make your application hard to understand and your grant hard to administer if it is funded. Too few categories may not provide enough information to judge the quality of your project. Remember, help is available. If you have questions contact Mark Brohman or Marilyn Tabor. Contact information is available by clicking "Contact" in the ribbon at the top of the page.

Funding Partners. Click "Funding Partners", "Manage Funding Partners" then "Add" to identify any Partners contributing cash or in-kind match. NET and your agency will populate the first two column headings. Partners added here will automatically populate the column headings for any Partner contributions on each year of your grant. Click "Save" to go back to the main "Budget" tab. Any Partner contributing to the project will need to provide a letter of support that should be attached as a pdf.

Remember, the Nebraska Environmental Trust encourages public-private partnerships; having both government and private sponsors will strengthen your application. Partner letters are to be submitted at the time of application, and are carefully considered as part of your proposal. Additional partner letters submitted after the application deadline will not be considered during the review process. If the application includes match applied for but not yet confirmed should be reported to NET as soon as match is confirmed.

A partner is any individual or organization that will contribute funds, services or materials to the project. Contractors are not partners. Donors of services or materials are partners.

List the partners and their contributions. Attach the letter of confirmation of participation from each partner as a pdf file. These letters should specify the dollar contribution to be made and confirm the partner's commitment to the project. A legally accountable representative of an organization must sign the letters. Letters of support or endorsement from others who are not partners are not appropriate in this section.

Budget Yr 1, Budget Yr 2, Budget Yr 3. A Budget sheet will be available for 1, 2, or 3 years depending on the number of years you have indicated. Click "Budget 20XX" then "Manage Budget" and enter funding requested from NET in the first column and contributions from your organization and each Partners. Repeat this for each Budget year. Click "Save" to update the budgets and go back to the main "Budget" tab. The "Budget Summary" will automatically be populated with information from the individual years and the "Total Amount Requested" in the heading will now include the total amount requested from NET. Any changes must be made in the individual year's budget.

Dollar amounts. Complete the table by inserting dollar amounts in the correct row and column. In the first column, insert the dollar amount requested in grant funds for each component in the appropriate row. In the second column insert dollar amounts from the Project Sponsor. In subsequent columns show matching contributions for each category from the other sources of funds for the project.

In-kind (non-cash) contributions. Indicate if match is in-kind on the "Funding Partner" tab where contributions are in-kind (for example, donated labor).

Additional Instructions for the Budget Tab:
Basis Used to Determine Cost. This information validates the dollar amounts shown in the Application Budget Worksheet. It helps to establish the cost-effectiveness of a project, matching funds and public-private partnerships. Complete the project sponsor information as requested.

Basis Used to Determine Cost could be a bid, estimate or purchase agreement. Sometimes, a calculation is an appropriate basis. For example, the calculation "hourly wage times number of hours needed" provides the basis for a labor cost. If you have documents to verify the information, attach the documents in pdf format here.

- **What are the bidding requirements for grant-funded purchases?**

Public agencies organized under the authority of the State of Nebraska or the United States Government may abide by purchasing and contracting rules established by their agencies. Individuals and private organizations will need to obtain at least two written bids for any material or service in excess of $1000 before funding will be issued. The estimates do not need to be obtained by the time the application is submitted.

- ***We are asking for Trust funding to purchase equipment. How specific does our description need to be?***

Provide as much specific information about the equipment as possible at the time of the application. Due to the processing time required for an application, it is not always possible to specify a model with costs. Specific information about grant-funded equipment will be required before funds will be issued.

- ***Are there additional requirements if a grant is made to buy equipment or real estate?***

All equipment must be used for the purpose described in the grant application for the useful life of the equipment. Usually, the depreciation schedule used for tax purposes is used to define the useful life. Grant-funded equipment may not be sold, transferred, traded or mortgaged without prior permission from the Trust. The grantee is also responsible for insuring grant-funded equipment valued at $1000 or more. Equipment valued over $25,000 has additional requirements.

Real estate purchased with Trust grants must be held in perpetuity for the purposes described in the grant application. This rule also applies to property where the Trust funds improvements or restorations. The grantee must continue to pay property taxes on all real estate acquired with a Trust grant, or must make arrangements for these taxes to be paid.

- ***We have already spent some of the project costs we are requesting grant funding for. How do we show this?***

The Trust does not usually reimburse funds expended prior to the grant recommendation. Exceptions are made for real estate purchases, due to the length of the application review period. Show "actual cost" as the basis in the Budget Justification chart, and attach a copy of the purchase instrument to verify costs.

C. Real Estate Section. This section will not apply to every project. Projects that seek Trust funding for the acquisition, development, improvement and/or restoration of real property or easements must file information in this section.

Applicant must identify whether or not mineral rights are intact if they are applying for a land purchase or easement. Application must also include aerial photo of the property and legal description.

Projects will not be funded that jeopardize habitat of threatened or endangered species. Grantees must cooperate with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and/or the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission in order to assure compliance with this requirement. Projects will not be funded that jeopardize historic or cultural resources. Grantees must cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in order to assure compliance with this requirement. Grantees will be required to meet conditions of compliance established by any of these agencies at their own expense.

In order to provide adequate information for the Trust to evaluate real estate proposals, the following information must be provided to the Trust on all projects:

1. Legal Description of all property or easements, including county where project is located and the number of acres affected.
2. Site Plan that shows the legal boundary of site, existing features and structures and proposed structures and improvements. Include the scale, a north arrow and a key. Clearly label the plan.
3. Attach a pdf file that briefly describes the landscape - what is the current condition of the property and what do you want it to look like in the future? Do the proposed changes work for the landscape?

<u>Restoration/Improvement/Development Projects:</u>

1. Attach plans, profiles, or cross-sections sufficiently detailed to show that the structures will be designed in accordance with any applicable regulations, codes or standard practices and to allow reasonable estimation of cost. Explain the rationale used to locate this project and to develop the design submitted. Describe all analysis and field investigations made to substantiate the design of the project. Provide a detailed discussion of any yet-to-be completed requirements for preparing the final plan, including geologic or hydrologic investigation; soil mechanics, structural, embankment or foundation criteria.
2. If restoration of, or improvements to, property not owned by the sponsor(s) are proposed, attach a letter from the landowner(s) confirming participation in the project.

<u>All Acquisition/Easement Projects:</u>

Several questions should be addressed when proposing a land acquisition or easement: 1) Why should the Trust be involved and does this project accomplish the purpose of the Trust; 2) What are the conservation, historical and cultural values of this property; 3) What is the conservation purpose of this proposal; 4) What capacity does the applicant have (personnel, financial resources, etc.) to carryout/accomplish the proposed purpose; 5) Who will hold title to the property or easement and describe how property maintenance will be handled.

Additional Acquisition Requirements:

*The Trust will not assist government agencies or subdivisions in the acquisition of land through the power of eminent domain. Proof of a willing seller is required prior to issuing funds.

* The Trust will require payment of property taxes or in-lieu of tax payments for all property acquired with grant funding, regardless of the tax status of the grantee.

Prior to closing: 1) Copy of purchase agreement that includes acknowledgement of the Trust's Involvement in the project; 2) Title Commitment; 3) Copy of Appraisal to support purchase price; 4) Brief description of management plan for the site.

At closing: 1) Reservation of Deed statement in the deed indicating the Trust's involvement in the purchase (if Trust contributes 50% or more of the appraised value). The language for this statement will be provided by the Trust; 2) Memorandum of Contract document to be filed by the sponsor (if Trust contributes 49% or less of appraised value). This form will be provided to the sponsor.

After closing: 1) Copy of the recorded deed/Memorandum of Contract; 2) Final Title Policy; 3) Closing statement; 4) Baseline Inventory - including photos of property from established photo points, FSA colored map and site map showing location of all buildings, wells, etc; 5) Biological Inventory - reflecting the specific purpose of the grant (prairie, endangered plant or animal); 6) Management Plan - final plan required within one year of closing - may include grazing plan, burn plan, restoration and improvement plan, public access, land use policies, monitoring plan to measure progress toward goals and ability to adapt plan if something isn't working.

Additional Easement Requirements:

Prior to closing: 1) Copy of purchase agreement that includes acknowledgement of the Trust's involvement in the project and that all conditions "survive closing"; 2) Copy of the easement document that includes a Reservation of Deed statement indicating the Trust's involvement in the transaction. 3) Memorandum of Contract document to be filed with the county by the sponsor acknowledging the Trust's involvement in the transaction. This form will be provided to the sponsor.

For all non-government entities the Trust will also require a Defense Fund of at least 10% of the appraised value for enforcement and annual monitoring expenses. This may be included as an eligible expense in your Trust budget. If the Trust funds are awarded for this use, we will require an annual accounting of the funds. Please provide a summary of how you will set up and manage this fund.

After closing: Copy of recorded easement and Memorandum of Contract.

- ***Our project will be implemented on land that is not identified yet. How do we complete this section?***

In the narrative section, describe clearly the criteria you will use to select property for your project, and an estimate of acres to be affected by the project. If funded, you will be required to provide this specific identifying information for selected property as a component of your grant reports.

D. Timeline Section. Click "Manage Timeline" then "Add". List the scheduled month and year to begin each component of the project. Every timeline should begin with the month the Trust grant is awarded and end with the month the Trust grant ends as component items. As you add dates the timeline will be sorted automatically by date when you click "Save".

- ***When does a funding year begin?***

If a project is recommended for funding, the grantee can begin spending when **the "Grants Committee Recommendations for Funding Placed in Rank Order"** is made public with the understanding that the recommendation can be reversed after the public hearing **at the Second Quarter board meeting** and no funding would be obligated. Funds can be released after the public hearing and when the Trust receives a signed grant contract with all required paperwork. A funding year usually ends on June 30. Subsequent years begin on July 1.

E. Attachments. Attachments added during previous sections will be listed here. Click "Add Attachments" to access each section and attach pdfs as necessary. Click "Save".

F. Submit. Click on the Submit tab. Click "Ready for Signature". A dialogue box will open for your clarification. "No" closes the dialogue box and takes you back to the "Submit" page. "Yes" creates a list of any required fields that are incomplete. Go back to the section with the deficiency and complete the required fields. Click "Save". Go back to the "Submit" tab and click "Ready for Signature".

> If all required fields are complete you will have the option to Print Signature Page. Print the Signature Page, get the authorized signature, scan and save the Signature Page as a pdf file. Click "Submit". The heading at the top of the grant will identify the application status as "Submitted".

If you choose "Re-open" you can make changes and go through the "Submit" process again.

If any changes are made, recreate the signature page. The Total Amount Requested on the Signature Page must be the same as the Total Amount Requested.

Use the buttons in the upper right corner to

1. Use "Delete" to delete the application
2. Use "Save As" to create a copy of the application. This will create an exact copy of the application just submitted with a new "Portal ID"
3. Print the application.

III. Application Assembly and Submission Checklist

Review the instructions in Section II to be sure you have included all of the required information and documentation.

The Board of the Nebraska Environmental Trust has adopted a policy accepting submission and modifications to pending applications using the electronic application form. All essential components including partner letters must be submitted by the deadline, with the original application filing.

Electronic submission. The Trust will only accept submission of applications using our electronic application form. The electronic submission must be *received* by the Trust by midnight CDT on the application deadline date. The electronic submission must be complete, and include all information required.