

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kinds of projects will the Nebraska Environmental Trust fund?

The Trust will fund projects that fall under the funding categories adopted by the board, and that meet eligibility criteria defined by the State Unicameral. The section labeled "Standards of Evaluation" includes a complete definition of the categories, as well as eligibility criteria and the rating scale used to select projects for funding.

Who can apply?

Individuals, private organizations, and public entities are all welcome to apply. Private, for-profit organizations must demonstrate that the project results in public benefit and does not pay for private benefits. See the discussion for private, for-profit applicants following the eligibility criteria in "Standards of Evaluation."

Is there a maximum grant amount?

No maximum is established. The Trust does provide a simplified application form for requests of \$15,000 or less, called the Recognition Grant.

Are there requirements for matching funds?

The Trust encourages the use of matching funds through points awarded in the rating scale. A match is not required in any amount or percentage. However, it is very unusual for the Trust to fund 100% of a project. The rating scale is included in the section, "Standards of Evaluation".

How many years will the Trust fund a project?

The Trust can provide funds to a project for up to three years based on one application. The project must be resubmitted and proceed through the competitive awards process again in order to continue to receive funds for more than three years.

How does the Trust select applications for funding?

Applications are subjected to two screening processes. First, the Technical Advisory Committee reviews proposals for feasibility and technically sound design. This Committee is made up of volunteers who are experts in a wide range of sciences and technical fields necessary to the evaluation of Trust projects. An applicant may be asked to provide additional information to clarify or supplement the contents of their application for this review.

The Grants Committee then reviews the application. This committee, comprised of six members of the Trust Board, makes an initial determination of eligibility. The committee also determines the level of funding a project should receive and rates each application. See "Standards of Evaluation" for details on eligibility and rating criteria.

The committee presents a package of funding recommendations to the Board. After releasing the list for public comment, the Board conducts a public hearing and awards grants at the close of the hearing.

When does the Trust accept applications, and when does it award grants?

The Nebraska Environmental Trust accepts and awards grants once each year. The calendar is posted on our website.

Does the Trust ever fund part of a proposal?

Yes. The Trust may select portions of an application proposal to fund. Some portions of an application might be deemed to contain ineligible activities. In that case, the committee may recommend funding for only the eligible portion. The committee may recommend partial funding of a multi-year project, or reduce an exceptionally large request in order to fund more projects.

Will the Trust consider applications for completed projects or purchases made before the application?

The Trust usually does not reimburse projects for costs incurred before a grant is recommended. An exception to this rule is made for real estate acquisitions, due to the length of time required for an application to be considered and approved; most landowners wanting to sell property would not issue an option for this long.

When does funding become available?

If a project is recommended for funding, the grantee can begin spending upon receipt of the letter of notification of the recommendation, with the understanding that the recommendation can be reversed after the public hearing 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.

What happens when a grant is recommended for funding?

If your project is recommended, you will be asked to sign a contract that specifies the terms of your grant award and submit a public information plan. You will be given a schedule of reporting requirements to keep the Trust apprised of project progress.

Most grants are awarded on a reimbursement basis, with sponsors receiving grant funds after they submit documentation to establish progress on the project.

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.

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, traded or mortgaged without prior permission from the Trust. The grantee is also responsible for insuring grant-funded equipment valued at \$1000 or more.

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. A 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.