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. We try very hard to keep overhead costs low, and forms that are filed incorrectly cost staff time which means less money available for grants.

You will need to submit seven copies of a complete application. Each copy of the complete general application has a cover sheet and five sections created by tabbed dividers. The dividers are to be labeled: Narrative, Budget, Timeline, Partners and Real Estate.

An electronic application format is also available to help those at a distance comply with the application deadline. This format can be downloaded from our Web site at www.environmentaltrust.org. Seven hard copies of an application must still be filed by applicants utilizing the electronic format.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit materials in 8" x 11" format. You may be required to submit additional copies of materials which are not this size, or which require special processing to duplicate. Please use recycled paper. Double-sided copies are encouraged to save paper as well. Applications that are three-hole punched are *greatly* appreciated.

A quick word about binding, report covers, and other fancy stuff: *Please don't!* These materials cost you more in time, materials and postage. We have to remove the bindings, covers and other fancy stuff when we receive your applications so that we can file the applications in three-ring binders for reviewers. Please just use rubber bands and/or spring loaded clips to keep the copies of your applications together. Use good, strong rubber bands, please.

You will receive a letter of confirmation after your application has been received. We regret that we cannot answer telephone inquiries about receipt of an application during the week of the deadline. We happily accept applications before the deadline date.

As you compile your application, be mindful that volunteers (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.

Because they are so important, we require that you use our cover sheet and budget forms. You may use photocopies of the forms. You may fill them in by hand. But, we really do want all the information requested on the cover sheet, on the cover sheet. Don't send in a form that says, "See attached sheet." We really do want the budget information requested in the format as described, filed in the appropriate section. Modifications to either form may result in disqualification of your application. If we can't find the information, we may find that we can't fund the project.

Label every page of your application with the sponsor name, project name, contact person and phone number at the top. Be sure that any attachments are clearly labeled to indicate content. You might ask someone unfamiliar with your application to read it for you. If they can't find attachments, chances are our reviewers will find it a challenge as well.

Letters of endorsement are not encouraged. Letters confirming participation of all partners are required. We must confirm partners in writing before a grant is awarded. See instructions for the "Partners" section.

Applicants are advised that all information submitted in an application becomes a matter of public record when grant recommendations are announced by the Board. 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

You will need the three forms provided in this packet and five tabbed dividers to create an application. Three-ring notebook dividers work well. The dividers should be labeled: Narrative, Budget, Timeline, Partners and Real Estate/Site Plans. Remember that you will need to submit seven copies of everything for a complete application.

A. The Cover Sheet. A form called the "Application Cover Sheet" is included in this packet. Please complete the form and file it as the first page of your application. Line by line instructions follow.

1. Project Sponsor. 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.

- *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.

2. Project Name. 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."

3 – 4. Project Location. List the counties where the project will be implemented. "Statewide" is a valid response in this item. The location of the nearest town will help us arrange site visits, if appropriate. Some projects may not have a physical location and may answer these items "N/A."

5. Total Amount Requested. Fill in the total amount of grant funds requested from the Trust under this application. Do not list the total cost of the project here.

6. Years of Funding. Indicate how many years of funding you are requesting. The Trust can fund a project for a maximum of three years per application award.

- *When does a funding year begin?*

    A project officially begins after a public hearing on grant awards following Board authorization and when the Trust receives a signed grant contract with all required paperwork. A funding year usually ends on June 30 of the following year. Subsequent funding years begin on July 1.

7 – 14. 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.

15. Sponsor web page. Sponsor organizations web page address.

16. Continuation or Resubmission. Circle "yes" or "no" for each question as appropriate.

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

18.-19. Federal and state permits and funding. These questions provide important information to determine eligibility. Be complete.

20. 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. *It must be 300 words or less.* This summary will be used to describe your project in Trust publications. *Do not* answer this item, "See attached sheet."

21. Signature. An authorized agent of the sponsor must sign the certification of the original copy of the cover sheet. Also print or type this name and title so that it is legible.

B. The Narrative Section. Create the first tabbed divider labeled "NARRATIVE." Behind this divider, in five pages or less, 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.

- 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.

C. The Budget and Financial Section. Create the second tabbed divider, and label it "BUDGET." In this section, file in order the Application Budget Worksheet(s), the Application Budget Justification, and financial information of the sponsor(s).

You must use the forms provided to complete this section. If you modify the forms, or fail to complete all of the steps requested, your application may be ruled ineligible. You may photocopy the forms or create electronic copies as needed.

C-1. Instructions for the Application Budget Worksheet. All applications must include a summary Budget Worksheet. Complete one Worksheet for the total project you are proposing. Projects applying for more than one year of funding must file a summary Worksheet and a Worksheet for each year of funding. File the summary Worksheet first, then annual Worksheets in order. Fill in the Sponsor Information as requested and circle "Summary" in the box at the top of the page.

Source of Funds. In Row 1 of the table, name the contributing partners of the project. Cell 1-B is completed, as Column B is reserved for the grant funds you are requesting from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Name the other sources of funds or contributing partners in Cells 1-C, 1-D and 1-E as needed.

- *What if a project has more than three contributing partners?*

Sometimes, a number of small donors can be combined in one column. For example, the column heading might be, "Community Donors". An explanation can be provided in the next part of the budget section.

It is also possible to make a multiple-page table. Number the pages. Write, "continued" in cell 18-F of the first page(s) and provide totals only in Column F of the last page.

Budget Categories. In Column A, beginning in Row 2, list the budget categories. For example, a lake project might have engineering, sediment removal, bank stabilization and fish restocking as budget categories. A recycling project might have trailer purchase, extra bins, maintenance and transportation budget categories. Place each category in a separate row.

- *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.

Dollar amounts. Now, complete the table by inserting dollar amounts in the correct row and column. In Column B, insert the dollar amount requested in grant funds for each component in the appropriate row. In Columns C, D and E, show matching contributions for each category from the other sources of funds for the project.

In-kind (non-cash) contributions. Place an asterisk (*) in each cell where contributions are in-kind (for example, donated labor).

Totals. Complete Column F by totaling each row. Complete the Row 18 by totaling each column. Column F and the Row 18 should total the same amount in Cell 18-F.

- *When does a funding year begin?*

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.

C-2. Instructions for the Application Budget Justification. This section 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. Answer questions 1-3 as appropriate.

Complete the chart. First, copy the budget categories from Column A of the Application Budget Worksheet. Then, for each category, describe the basis used to estimate the dollar amounts given in the Application Budget Worksheet. A basis 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. Finally, if you are attaching a copy of a document to verify information, indicate the name of the document in the third column. Clearly label the document with this name.

- *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, 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. 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-3. Instructions for Project Sponsor Financial Information. Last in this section file appropriate information as stated below. The Trust reserves the right to request any additional information at its discretion.

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

<u>Private not-for-profit organizations</u>: provide operating budget for the current year and most recent Form 990.

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

<u>Individual</u> 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?_**

Every organization listed on the cover sheet as a sponsor should provide financial information. This information is not required for every donor or contributor to the project.

D. Instructions for the Timeline Section. Create the third tabbed divider, and label it "TIMELINE." In this section, list the scheduled month and year to begin and end each component of the project. Every timeline should include "Trust Grant Awarded" and "Trust Grant Ends" as component items.

E. Instructions for the Partners Section. Create the fourth tabbed divider, and label it "PARTNERS." Remember, the Nebraska Environmental Trust encourages public-private partnerships; having both government and private sponsors will strengthen your application.

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.

Provide a list of the partners and their contributions as the first page of this section. Include a letter of confirmation of participation from each partner after this page. These letters should specify the 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.

F. Instructions for the Real Estate/Site Plan 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.

No grant will be funded that jeopardizes habitat of threatened or endangered species. Grantees must cooperate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in order to assure compliance with this requirement. Grantees will be required to meet conditions of compliance established by these agencies at their own expense.

No grant will be funded that jeopardizes 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 this agency at their own expense.

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 for all property acquired with grant funding, regardless of the tax status of the grantee.

Create the fifth tabbed divider, and label it "REAL ESTATE." Provide the requested information, in the following order. Label each item clearly.

1. The legal description of all property or easements to be acquired, developed or restored. Identify the county(s) in which the property is located. State clearly the total number of acres to be acquired, developed or restored.

2. A site plan that shows the legal boundary of the site; existing features and structures; and proposed structures and improvements. Include the scale, a north arrow and a key. Clearly label the plan.

3. Evidence of title and outstanding easements, liens or encumbrances.

4. If a purchase is proposed: attach a copy of the option, purchase agreement or other instrument negotiated with the current owner.

5. If a structural project is proposed: 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 analyses 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.

6. 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.

- *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.

III. Application Assembly and Submission Requirements

Review the instructions in Section II to be sure you have included all of the required information and documentation. You may use these instructions as a checklist. Assemble the materials in order.

Bind the copy of the application that contains original documents first. Use spring clips or strong rubber bands. Label this copy, "Original." Bind the remaining six copies.

Two options for submission of a completed application are available:

Electronic submission. The Trust will accept submission of an application using our electronic application form. The electronic submission must be *received* by the Trust by 5:00 p.m. on the application deadline date. In addition, seven hard copies of the application must be received by the Trust no later than 5:00 p.m. *on the Friday following the deadline date.*

The electronic submission must be complete, and include all information required in a hard copy submission except that which is not physically possible to include, e.g., signed letters. Instructions included with the electronic form provide more detail about materials which must be included electronically. The electronic form is available for download at the Trust's Web site at www.environmentaltrust.org.

Hard-copy submission. The Trust will also accept traditional submissions of applications. Seven copies of the completed application must be *received* by the Trust no later than 5:00 p.m. on the application deadline date.

We regret that we cannot confirm receipt of an application the week of the application deadline. Applicants are encouraged to submit materials well ahead of the deadline to assure receipt in time to be included in the annual grant review.
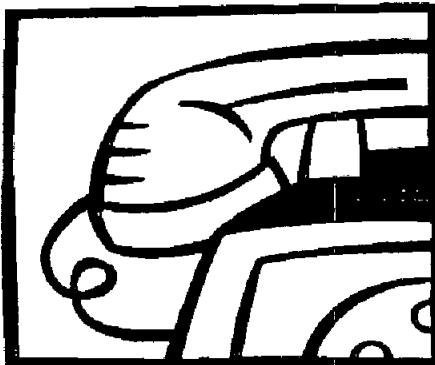
Help Is Available. If you have questions or would like to discuss a project, you are encouraged to contact the Trust office. We will be happy to answer simple questions immediately, or arrange an appointment for you to discuss a draft proposal in detail with staff. You can reach our office at (402) 471-5409.