

**To:** Nebraska Natural Resources Commission

**From:** Jennifer Swanson, Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD)

**Subject:** 2025 Water Sustainability Fund – Annual Report

**Award Amount:** \$240,000

**Project Overview: April 2024 – April 2025**

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) continued development and deployment of *Producer Connect*, a collaborative digital tool designed to empower agricultural producers with the tools they need to optimize inputs, enhance agricultural profitability, improve water quality, and increase irrigation efficiency.

**Key Project Activities:**

- **April 6, 2024:** Demonstration of *Producer Connect* with NARD to review platform development.
- **May 17, 2024:** Steering Committee demo; outlined testing plan and next steps for NRD engagement.
- **August 16, 2024:** Meeting with Lower Elkhorn NRD to discuss platform functionality and gather feedback.
- **September 13, 2024:** Project partners demo to solicit feedback and identify desired platform enhancements.
- **September 16, 2024:** Webinar — *Managing Nebraska's Water: The Role of NRDs, Groundwater Nitrate Concerns, and the Future of Efficient Irrigation with Producer Connect*.
- **October 9, 2024:** Presented *Producer Connect* at the Nebraska Water Center Conference.
- **November 19, 2024:** Steering Committee meeting to assess progress and refine strategy.
- **December 19, 2024:** Platform demo for Nebraska Cooperative Council.
- **January 16, 2025:** Steering Committee meeting to discuss rollout and next phase.
- **March 5, 2025:** *Producer Connect* demo at the NRD Managers Meeting.

**Additional Accomplishments:**

- Outreach strategy finalized.
- Social media campaign content developed.
- Producer sign-up letter created.
- Phase 1 of *Producer Connect* finalized and operational.

**Anticipated Activities: April 2025 – April 2026**

- Begin producer sign-up and onboarding.
- Steering Committee to outline additional features, outreach enhancements, and NRD training logistics.
- Scheduled NRD training sessions:
  - April 28, 2025

- May 6, 2025
- May 27, 2025
- June 2, 2025
- Potential Booth for *Producer Connect* sign-up at Husker Harvest Days
- *Producer Connect* used for collecting 2025 NRD crop reports.

**Projected Expenses & Reimbursements**

Reimbursement	Date Submitted	Total Amount	WSF Contribution	NARD Match
1	January 2024	\$100,000	\$60,000	\$40,000
2	September 2024	\$123,500	\$74,100	\$49,400
3	October 2024	\$26,500	\$15,900	\$10,600

**Remaining Funds:** \$90,000 available for reimbursement requests over the next two years.