Transforming Program Evaluation and Storytelling with PEARS

University of Nebraska - Lincoln's Cooperative Extension service faced a major challenge: tracking and communicating the impact of over 11,000 distinct activities while presenting a unified message to stakeholders. As they looked ahead, they needed a solution that was both powerful and adaptable to their evolving needs .

The Challenge:

They weren't just looking for a database. They needed a system that could:

- Efficiently track a wide range of program activities.
- Clearly communicate the impact of their efforts in a unified, compelling way.
- Support intentional planning and meaningful evaluation.
- Deliver clear, accessible outcome reporting to stakeholders.
- Evolve alongside the organization—without driving up costs.

The Solution:

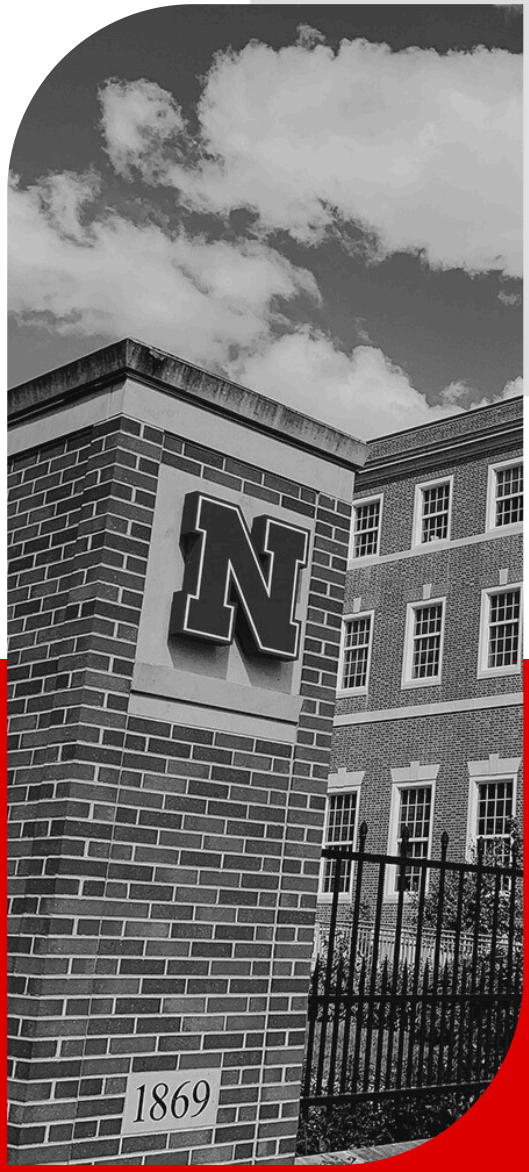
PEARS offered a tailored, sophisticated platform built specifically for extension work—not repurposed from corporate tools. This alignment made PEARS a natural fit. Key features that stood out included:

- Intuitive data entry that reduces administrative burden.
- Flexibility to accommodate new programs and organizational changes.
- Powerful reporting tools to showcase impact and success stories.
- Built-in tools that support collaborative planning and reflection.

Real Results

Educators and specialists consistently praised PEARS for its ease of use and its ability to capture meaningful stories from the field. The Agricultural Communications team regularly reviewed these entries, transforming them into powerful outreach content that resonated with stakeholders.

Beyond storytelling, the system fostered a culture of intentional planning and collaboration. By centralizing data entry and incorporating tools like QR codes for participant surveys, Nebraska Extension reduced duplication and streamlined data collection—freeing up time for frontline work.



A Partnership that Grows

Throughout implementation and beyond, Canopy—the team behind PEARS—provided exceptional support. Their grassroots, user-centered approach ensured that system updates were driven by real-world needs. Nebraska Extension's participation on Canopy's advisory board strengthened this collaboration, helping shape new features based on user priorities.

The Impact

- Since adopting PEARS, Nebraska Extension has seen:
- Greater visibility of success stories to support outreach and advocacy.
- More efficient and accurate data collection.
- Stronger program planning and evaluation processes.
- Improved alignment between both programming and strategic goals.
- Increased buy-in from staff thanks to a user-friendly design.

Looking Ahead

For Nebraska Extension, PEARS has been a game-changer—enhancing communication, supporting strategy, and making it easier for staff to focus on what truly matters: improving lives across Nebraska. While no system is perfect, PEARS continues to evolve alongside its users, offering innovative tools like mobile data entry and QR code-based surveys. By putting users first, Nebraska Extension is staying focused on its mission while building a stronger foundation for the future.

canopy