STANDARDS REVISION THROUGH DIGITAL COLLABORATION

LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

WHO
Land Trust Alliance used Ethelo to engage more than 1,100 members across the USA.

WHAT
Collective revision of internal standards

NEED
Focus and prioritize multiple insights to update a key document

OUTCOME

Expedient evaluation of proposed wordings

The Land Trust Alliance needed a seamless way to update its Land Trust Standards and Practices. Ethelo functioned as a forum to evaluate the new Standard. Integrating 2,000 comments with ratings from 350+ members across the USA, the platform provided a clear indication of elements with high levels of approval as well as those needing further rewording. Ethelo's platform saved around 150 hours of staff time.

TRANSPARENT AND UNIFYING COLLABORATION ACROSS THE USA TO REVISE ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS

With over 1,100 land trust members across the United States, since 2005 the LTA has been relying on the Land Trust Standards and Practices as the essential policy roadmap to help preserve public trust and run an effective organization. But the advisory team wanted an updated document "of" and "for" the land trust community. The LTA needed a way to collaborate, regardless of timezone or location.

The 62 practices of the Standard were broken into single sentences and presented in rating/social-dialogue boxes. Each person rated their level of support for each statement, added relevant commentary, and replied to or liked other members' contributions. The open dialogue also enabled the management team to have an evolving record of the evaluation. The completion rate for LTA staff, board members, and consultants ranged from 67% to 82%.

Sentences with low ratings were clear calls for action, indicating which proposed wordings required attention. For this purpose, the LTA drew upon the suggested re-wordings posted by members themselves in Ethelo's integrated comment boxes. Instead of drawing on one-way insights, this social dialogue functioned as an internal source of cross-validation, allowing the LTA project managers to quickly identify highly-supported concerns and suggestions.

By integrating votes, comments, and their crowdsourced validation, Ethelo enabled an estimated reduction of 154 LTA staff hours (1 Month FTE). This represented an overall 85% time-saving, delivering actionable results faster than conventional methods.

Perhaps the largest area of time saving was for the members themselves. Nearly 200 hours were estimated to be saved, representing a 65% saving over alternative methods. *"Ethelo's more expedient way of obtaining feedback reduced the risk of members feeling irritated (or abandoning) what would have otherwise been a more cumbersome survey."* Considering only LTA staff time, the cost savings were 38%. With the member time saving included, the savings jumped to 87%.

Based on the feedback received, a first round of evaluations allowed the management team to adjust the proposed language. A second round reset all previous ratings and comments, so that LTA members could start afresh and evaluate the modified re-wordings.

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This has been a very authentic way to show that we in fact have listened to our members. The interaction has been a key component. And the time savings on compiling data and comments are astronomical compared with more traditional survey tools.

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