

Podcasting across Nebraska Year 2

Sponsoring Entity: University of Nebraska

Amount Requested: \$19,999

Project Summary

The University of Nebraska in conjunction with the NITC Community Council is requesting \$19,999 to work with 7 communities or regional groups to develop podcasts which promote tourism, events, recreation, historic sites, and other activities. Project partners include the NITC Community Council, University of Nebraska (including Extension, New Media Center, Communications and Information Technology, and Computing Service Network), Network Nebraska, Department of Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Nebraska Lied Main Street program, and Apple Computer. The project is a continuation of the pilot project funded by the Nebraska Information Technology Commission in 2006.

Needs Assessment

Podcasting is a method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio or video programs, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. Podcasts can be downloaded automatically using software capable of reading RSS or Atom feeds or can be downloaded directly from a Web site. Since its introduction in 2003, podcasting has experienced tremendous growth, fueled by Apple's inclusion of podcasts in its popular iTunes software in June, 2005.

Although podcast listeners still comprise a small segment of the U.S. population, interest in podcasting is growing. Edison Media Research estimates that 13% of Americans listen to podcasts and found that the percentage of Americans aware of podcasts has grown from 22% in 2006 to 37% in 2007.

Podcasting may be a particularly powerful tool for marketing tourism attractions and events. The Internet is already heavily used for travel planning. Eighty-eight percent of consumers who traveled in summer 2005 used the Internet to research and purchase their trips according to Claria Corporation's Feedback Research Division. Based on the success of its Winter Olympics travel podcast, American Express announced that it will be expanding its podcasting services. There are over 1,000 podcasts in the Travel and Places category in iTunes.

There are a number of advantages of using podcasting to promote tourism. Podcasting is an inexpensive method of producing and distributing content. Podcast content can be easily updated. Podcasts, particularly videocasts and audiocasts enhanced with photos, maps, or other images, are well suited to show off Nebraska's varied scenery and wildlife, to explain the history of the state's many trails, and to show the state's friendly residents. Podcasting may be an effective method of marketing to young families. This project will also have the secondary benefit of helping communities utilize new technologies and better understand the potential of these new technologies as communication tools.

Preliminary Pilot Outcomes

- Thirty-three community and regional groups applied to participate in the Podcasting Across Nebraska program in year one of the program, indicating significant interest in the program.
- The City of South Sioux City/South Sioux City Public Schools, the North Platte/Lincoln County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Highway 14 Association, and the Panhandle Public Health District received training on podcast production, training over 30 in podcast production.
- Participants are creating podcasts using equipment provided through the program. The North Platte/Lincoln County Convention and Visitors Bureau has produced five audio podcasts on fishing in Lincoln County, the North Platte Canteen, Buffalo Bill State Historical Park, attractions and events in and around North Platte, and the Sandhill Crane migration in the Platte River Valley. South Sioux has produced three video podcasts promoting economic development, tourism, and spring city services. South Sioux City Public Schools students have produced 4 video school news podcasts. The Panhandle Public Health District and the Highway 14 Association are finishing up their initial podcasts and intend to have them finished by May 18, 2007. Participating communities and regional groups intend to continue creating podcasts on a regular basis.
- Network Nebraska is hosting podcasts.
- Nine additional training sessions have been held across the state, training a total of 96 people on podcast production.

Preliminary Lessons Learned from Pilot

- There is tremendous interest in podcasting in Nebraska communities.
- Communities have many ideas for how to use podcasting.
- Podcasting is relatively easy to learn. Publishing podcasts is the most difficult step. It has been invaluable to be able to host the podcasts on the Network Nebraska server. It would be difficult if each community had to find their own server.
- It is still easier to create podcasts using an Apple computer. This presents some challenges when working with adults who are more likely to have access to computers using Windows.

Project Description

Participant Selection. Community or regional groups will be invited to submit applications to participate in the pilot podcasting program. Seven communities or regional groups will be selected by a selection committee comprised of representatives of the project partners. Criteria will include strength of local or regional partnerships, planned use of podcasts, and youth/school involvement. Every effort will be made to select communities or regional groups from various parts of the state.

Podcast Training. Participating community or regional groups will receive six hours of training on podcast production. The training will also include information on how to publicize the podcasts. The University of Nebraska's mobile computer lab will be available for training. The computer lab can be set up in a meeting room or using the University of Nebraska Extensions mobile training classroom, the BITMobile. An additional three Macbooks, mice and covers as well as two digital audio recorders to expand training capabilities are requested in this proposal.

Podcast Production. Each participating community or regional group will receive a Macbook, mouse, Mac cover, and audio recorder. In return, each participating community or regional groups must agree to produce at least four podcasts. If needed, ongoing assistance will be provided to participants via phone or e-mail. Participating community and regional groups will be encouraged to share their learning experienced and finished podcasts with the other groups participating in the pilot.

Podcast Hosting. Network Nebraska will host podcasts for Podcasting Across Nebraska communities for one-year if their current Web host cannot accommodate their podcasts.

Additional Training. Additional training will be available through the University of Nebraska Extension. The current fee is \$39 per person for six hours of training.

Project Goal

To foster the effective use of podcasting to promote tourism, events, recreation in seven Nebraska communities or regional groups.

Expected outcomes

- At least 40 individuals from 7 participating community and regional groups will be trained on podcast production.
- At least 6 additional workshops on podcasting will be offered across the state.
- Seven community or regional groups will develop podcasts promoting tourism, events, recreation, historic sites, and other activities.
- Participating community or regional groups will better understand new technologies and the potential of these new technologies as communication tools.
- Promotional efforts with participating community and regional groups will be enhanced.

Evaluation

The program will be evaluated by several methods including:

- Pretest and post tests by training participants on technology skills and attitudes toward new technologies;
- Focus group discussion with participants after the completion of the program;
- Podcast downloads.

Dissemination

Success stories from the program will be featured in *TANgents* and *NITC.news*. Project partners will also assist in publicizing program success stories.

Timeline

July

Publish guidelines and announce the program (July 2)

August-September

Select pilot community or regional groups

- Applications due (August 17, 2007)
- Announce participants (Sept. 10)
- Order equipment
- Schedule community trainings

September- November

Conduct community trainings

December-June

Podcast production

May-June

Evaluation

Budget

Item(s)	Cost
Equipment for Training Lab 3 MacBooks with Apple Care ⁱ (3 X \$1,332 = \$3,996) 3 mice (3 X \$44 = \$132) 3 Mac covers (3 X \$20 = \$60) 1 audio recorder for Nano (\$43) 1 M-Audio MicroTrack ⁱⁱ 24/96 (\$320.00)	\$4,571
Equipment for 7 participating communities 7 MacBooks with Apple Care (7 X \$1,332 = \$9,324) 7 mice (7 X \$44 = \$308) 7 Mac covers (7 X \$20 = \$140) 7 M-Audio MicroTrack 24/96 (7 X \$340 = \$2,380)	\$12,152
Travel \$418 per community (7 X \$418 = \$2,926)	\$2,926
Copies/Supplies \$50 per community (7 X \$50 = \$350)	\$350
TOTAL	\$19,999

In kind contributions will include community training by University of Nebraska Extension and other resource persons, podcast hosting by Network Nebraska, travel costs of participants in podcasting training, and the time of community members in creating podcasts.

ⁱ MacBook 5-Pack (13.3" 2.0GHz/ 1GB/ 80G/ SuperDrive/ APX/ BT) with AppleCare Protection Plan Auto Enroll

ⁱⁱ The M-Audio MicroTrack 24/96 is a high-fidelity mobile 2-channel digital recorder that records WAV and MP3 files to CompactFlash or microdrives. Record via balanced line inputs or built-in high-fidelity microphone preamps complete with phantom power for condenser microphones. Connect MicroTrack 24/96 to a PC or Mac via USB and simply drag and drop recordings to your computer for immediate editing or Web posting. Power derives from a lithium-ion battery, and the unit can recharge via the computer's USB connection.