

Podcasting Across Nebraska

2006-2007 Application

Applicant: GROW Nebraska
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1. Is this application from:

A single community

A single community with multiple partners (Please list partners below.)

A regional group of communities (Please list participating communities and organizations below.)

Participating communities and organizations:

GROW Nebraska, a statewide program
Bertrand Community School – Jennifer Kaps, English and Drama teacher
Southern Valley School (near Oxford) – Kristi Bose, English and Drama teacher
Nebraska Rural Living – a project of the South Platte United Chamber of Commerce
and Business Beyond the Farm

Who will act as the lead for this project?

Sara Stevens-Stehl, Director of Communications for GROW Nebraska

Where will the equipment be housed?

The GROW Nebraska office in Holbrook, Nebraska. If the program is a successful applicant, ATC Communications in Arapahoe will conduct maintenance and updating.

2. Why is your community or region interested in podcasting?

A statewide market access program, GROW Nebraska serves entrepreneurs and small businesses across the state. GROW Nebraska's mission is to maximize Nebraska's entrepreneurial spirit; create an economically viable and sustainable environment for entrepreneurs; and generate social awareness through promotion, marketing, and education. The GROW Nebraska web site is the place to find dynamic, diverse products from Nebraska's entrepreneurs. The program is always looking for new and better ways to promote these small businesses, and is currently pursuing promotion of the cultural tourism opportunity available to many of these enterprises.

A partnership between GROW Nebraska and Nebraska Rural Living DED is one of four organizations nationwide which was selected to be part of the Regional Flavors Learning Cluster being conducted by the Association for Enterprise Opportunity, which is funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Regional Flavor provides a marketing umbrella that builds upon a region's unique assets of heritage, culture, physical features, and other attributes, with the ultimate goal of marketing these characteristics to visitors. The Regional Flavor Learning Cluster was inspired by the lessons learned through AEO's Rural Learning Clusters (2001-05) that focused on tourism, artisans, and food-based businesses. The knowledge gained from this four-year project will be a tremendous asset to developing cultural tourism opportunities in Nebraska.

The executive team of GROW Nebraska has a vision for the GROW Nebraska web site that it will become a portal, the place to find all the best of Nebraska within three clicks. People will be able to find out about unique cultural tourism opportunities, dynamic entrepreneurs with fabulous products for sale, and buy those products. Podcasting can be a vibrant part of the experience of the web site and draw visitors to the state.

John Marquis, owner of Ogallala Bay Rum and a member of GROW Nebraska, epitomizes the impact the program has for its members:

I have now sold my products in 5 other countries and 42 states.... not bad for the first 9 months, I thought! Gotta love the internet!!!! And, oh yeah.... GROW rocks

3. Please describe how your community or region plans to use audio and/or video content to promote tourism, events, recreation, historic sites, and other activities. Please include project goals (i.e., to promote the county fair) and expected outcomes (i.e., an increase in visitors from outside the county) for at least two podcasts that will be made available over the Internet.

GROW Nebraska has been funded to expand the program's current web site to include a 'Nebraska Nuances' cultural tourism guide. This will be a dynamic, database driven web site featuring an interactive state map designating Nebraska art or craft studios, vineyards with tasting rooms and gift shops, birding trails and Nebraska fine art museums. The interest in the 'Nebraska Nuances' project will create regional flavor interest by helping to create a more refined image of our state

and increase interest in Nebraska tourism. Materials will be distributed to visitors and residents. The 'Nebraska Nuances' map would be featured on the GROW Nebraska landing page with a direct link to the interactive site. The project will create new market opportunities for Nebraska artists through an increase in cultural travelers and collectors. These visitors will impact local businesses in the communities where artists reside, which will make those businesses more economically viable and increase the impact they have on their communities.

Nebraska Rural Living, a partnership of South Platte United Chambers of Commerce and GROW Nebraska member Business Beyond the Farm, is developing a bird watching route titled the Chicken Dance Trail to promote the birding and nature opportunities which abound in south-central Nebraska. GROW Nebraska is a partner in promoting the experience. There is no better way to entice nature lovers to explore the opportunities available in this region than to be able to show them video, online, of dancing prairie chickens and the sandhill crane migration.

The program would like to be able to add a podcast to the GROW Nebraska web page for each cultural tourism opportunity. The best way to attract visitors is to give them an audio/visual taste of their potential destination. As stated before, GROW Nebraska is a statewide program, so all areas of the state have the potential to benefit from this project.

4. How do you plan to promote the podcasts created through this project?

Promotional materials will include a printed rack card, which will be made available to any organization promoting tourism in Nebraska. GROW Nebraska is developing a cultural tourism guide to complement the 'Nebraska Nuances' project, and that guide will refer readers to the web site for the most up-to-date information. The project will be featured on the GROW Nebraska web site landing page, and participating members and organizations will be designated with a 'Nebraska Nuances' icon. Their web sites will be linked to the project web site. Materials will be distributed to visitors, potential visitors and residents. GROW Nebraska will work with project stakeholders to identify keyword advertising on the Google and Yahoo search engines. Advertising will be geo-targeted so that visitors in Nebraska see a different advertising marketing message than those in other states.

GROW Nebraska owns over 40 domain names which are directed to the landing page of the GROW Nebraska web site. Established in 1998, the GROW Nebraska web site receives approximately 1,700 unique visits daily and is reciprocally linked with more than 200 other web sites. The site is the second listing on a Google search for Nebraska products, beaten only by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

As stated previously, the 'Nebraska Nuances' map would be featured on the landing page with a direct link to the interactive site. The project will create new market opportunities for Nebraska artists and entrepreneurs through an increase in cultural travelers and collectors. These visitors will in all likelihood visit local businesses in the communities where artists reside, which will make those businesses more economically viable and increase the impact they have on their communities.

5. Please list the regional or community Web sites that could link to the podcasts produced through this project?

GROW Nebraska is in partnership with the Nebraska Wineries and Grape Growers Association and the Nebraska Association of Bed and Breakfast inns, and each of those organizations would be invited to link to the 'Nebraska Nuances' web site and the podcasts. The program has strong support from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and the Division of Travel and Tourism, and they would be invited to link to the map. Another strong supporter of GROW Nebraska is the Nebraska Public Power District, which operates web sites for a large number of communities within the state, and they would be invited to link to the site. Any community with an attraction listed on the 'Nebraska Nuances' map would be invited to link to the site, in addition to the link from any attraction's web site.

6. Will this project involve youth? If so, how will they be involved?

GROW Nebraska would like to use the voice talents of youth in creating the podcasts. Kristi Bose, English and Drama instructor at Southern Valley High School, is also the Media and Public Relations Coordinator for GROW Nebraska, and has agreed to serve on this project to recruit talented youth from her school. Jennifer Kaps, English and Drama instructor at Bertrand Community Schools, has also agreed to serve in this capacity. Kaps has led the Bertrand One-Act Play team to the state finals the last three years, and brought home two state champion trophies. Not only is she a talented instructor, she has a knack for developing the talents of her pupils. Students showing a 'creative, technological' bent will be encouraged to participate more fully in the creation of the podcasts, as time and budgets allow.

7. Are any other uses of podcasting within your community or region in place or planned?

GROW Nebraska is developing a monthly series of short training seminars, and once that program is established, and the podcasting training is in place, the program would like to develop podcasts of those seminars to create an archive for the use of GROW Nebraska members to expand their business-building skills.

The equipment would be made available to the participating schools for use in projects to promote the schools and to allow the students to develop additional technological skills.

GROW Nebraska is always looking for additional ways to make the producers and products of the state come to life. As the GROW web site evolves, the executive team of GROW has a vision of a podcast of each member talking about their products, how they were developed, and what it means to them to be able to live in Anywhere, Nebraska, and pursue their dreams of being an artist, a jelly maker, a jewelry maker, an author, a craftsman of fine furnishings. Nebraska truly is the good life, and GROW Nebraska wishes to promote and sustain the communities that have spawned the creative, dynamic people served by the program, and podcasting is an ideal tool.