

Project Title: Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NeHII) Health Information Exchange

Submitting Entity: NeHII, Inc in association with the University of Nebraska at Omaha

Grant Amount Requested: \$100,000

Executive Summary

In 2006, healthcare professionals from across Nebraska gathered to conduct a strategic planning session - the goal, to create a statewide health information exchange (HIE) for the betterment of patient care in the state. Once implemented, the system would enable physicians statewide to view consolidated patient medical history at the point of care, improving safety and care delivery while reducing duplicate or redundant procedures. Since that session, the progress of NeHII has outpaced all similar activities. NeHII hopes to begin exchanging data in the next six months, making it one of the first statewide HIEs in the country. The most significant aspect to the project is the innovative ideas used to fund the project and make it sustainable for future generations. Based on projected adoption rates, NeHII is expected to generate sufficient margins to not only fund operations, but also subsidize rural providers and decrease the financial impacts across the state. A proven sustainable business model ensures adequate project funding will be available when needed. The funds being sought with this grant application will be applied to fund a proof of concept pilot project and demonstrate the validity of exchanging medical information including clinical messaging, e-prescribing and physician referral.

NeHII's progress is due to its success at engaging and securing assistance from stakeholders across the state. Existing participants donated their time and money to make the initiative successful. As the project moves forward, discussions have moved from participant/stakeholder support to major employers, governmental officials and foundations to support the project implementation costs. All these activities and more led NeHII to a pilot phase that will begin live production use in fourth quarter 2008.

Comments/History: NeHII originally submitted a proposal in the spring of 2008. Council members were very supportive of NeHII's vision and goals. However, Council members expressed concern about the lack of funding commitment from other project partners and a lack of specificity in the original proposal. Members were also unclear about the relationship between NeHII and the Scott Center at UNO. The Community Council recommended inviting NeHII to reapply. Members of the Technical Panel determined that the NeHII proposal was technically feasible and used appropriate technology, but that the funding requested was insufficient without the commitment of other funds. At their meeting in June, the NITC asked NeHII to reapply when the project presented a more positive business case.

Community Council and Staff Comments: Community Council members expressed their support for the revised NeHII proposal. Members felt that the revised proposal better defined the relationship between NeHII and UNO and presented a more positive business case. One minor area of concern mentioned was the difficulty in rolling out full implementation immediately after the conclusion of the pilot. Deb Bass, Interim Executive Director of NeHII, later responded to this comment by clarifying that NeHII intended to evaluate the pilot and make modifications if necessary before rolling out full implementation. Dr. Delane Wycoff expressed his approval of the chosen vendor, commenting that Grand Junction, Colorado has utilized the same vendor and has had notable results. The Idaho Health Data Exchange recently announced it will also be working with Axolotl. Other health information exchanges using Axolotl include HealthBridge in the greater Cincinnati area and the Rochester Regional Health Information Organization. An update on NeHII's activities is included with the meeting materials.

Technical Panel Comments: The Technical Panel recommended forwarding the NeHII proposal to the NITC for consideration, noting that the project is technically feasible and the proposed technology is appropriate for the project but that the NITC needs to understand the financial risk associated with the project's completion due to ongoing funding efforts. The NITC should also be aware that additional public requests could come back to both the Technical Panel and the NITC for future approval.

Project Title: Public Input on Sharing Electronic Health Records: The Views of Nebraskans

Submitting Entity: Board of Regents, University of Nebraska on behalf of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

Grant Amount Requested: \$20,800.00

Executive Summary

The overall goal of the proposed project is to obtain perspectives of Nebraskans about electronic sharing of health information, and in particular, perspectives about legal and policy issues currently under consideration by the NITC, HISPC, e-Health council, and other state policymakers and advisory groups. The funds provided by the grant will support our activities to document Nebraskans' knowledge of and attitudes towards these issues by preparing for and convening two surveys and a Deliberative Poll®. Randomly selected residents of Nebraska from three communities across the state will be invited to participate in an online survey. Twenty-five to thirty residents of Lincoln/Lancaster County will be invited to participate in the Deliberative Poll and take a second survey. The Public Policy Center will work closely with a stakeholders' working group composed of members of the NITC, HISPC, e-Health council, and others, to identify priority questions of interest that are either currently – or will soon be – under consideration by state policymakers, and which public input and commentary could shed light on. This project will simultaneously achieve three outcomes: It will 1) engage a sample of Nebraskans about important legal and policy issues surrounding e-sharing of health information; 2) increase knowledge and understanding of these issues among a sub-sample of Nebraskans; and 3) provide state policymakers and stakeholders with perspectives from the public about these important issues. The project completion date is December 2008, and all findings will be disseminated publicly prior to the January 2009 legislative session.

Comments/History: The University of Nebraska originally submitted a proposal in the spring of 2008 requesting \$39,777. Reviews of the original proposal, while generally positive, were mixed with a few more critical reviews. Several members and reviewers felt that the proposed project would yield significant benefits. Others questioned if the cost of the proposal was too high and if the project would yield information that is already available have from other sources. eHealth Council members felt that if funded, the Public Input, Health Information Security and Privacy Consumer Education, and Health Information Security and Privacy Web Site projects should coordinate efforts. The eHealth Council recommended funding the initial proposal at less than the amount requested. The Technical Panel determined that the original project was technically feasible, used appropriate technology, and could be completed on time and within budget. At their June meeting, the NITC asked the University of Nebraska to resubmit a proposal. Ms. Byers met with staff of the Public Policy Center and suggested that a revised proposal would have a greater chance of being funded if the budget was reduced and if the research was tied to possible policy actions. The proposed project was revised to address these concerns.

eHealth Council Comments: Concern was expressed about the possible overlap between the Nebraska Public Policy Center proposal and work currently being done by the Creighton Health Services Research Program. The Council recommended approving the proposal with the stipulation that the Public Policy Center coordinate with the Creighton Health Services Research Program to avoid overlap and that the projects survey different communities. The Public Policy Center has met with the Nebraska HISPC and with representatives of Creighton University to facilitate coordination of efforts.

Technical Panel Comments: The Technical Panel concluded that there were no technical aspects of the proposal for the Panel to review and recommended forwarding the proposal to the NITC for review and recommendation.