Governor's Business Portal Initiative
Wednesday January 24, 2001
10 a.m. to Noon
Nebraska Department of Labor -- 3rd Floor Conference Room
550 South 16th Street, Lincoln

Minutes

A. Participants

Allan	Albers	Health and Human Services
Rod	Armstrong	Nebrask@ Online
Rick	Becker	Office of the CIO
Randy	Cecrle	Workers' Compensation Court
Laura	Haist	Banking and Finance
Kelly	Lammers	Banking and Finance
Greg	Lemon	Secretary of State's Office
Jim	McGee	Health and Human Services
Cliff	Mosteller	Nebraska Business Development Center (UN)
James	O'Connor	Nebraska Bar Association
Cliff	Privatt	Correctional Services
Steve	Schafer	CIO
Bob	Shanahan	Labor
Robert	Storant	Agriculture
Mardene	Sukovaty	Military Department
Gary	Timm	Insurance
Steve	Williams	Economic Development

A. Corrections to minutes of January 10 meeting
   On page 1, the industry codes, which will replace SIC codes should be spelled
   NAICS, not NAC.

B. Updates from prior meeting
   1. Inventory instrument
      Steve Schafer summarized the purposes of the survey. Information from
      agencies will provide a snapshot of what forms are available online
      presently as well as a complete accounting of all forms that apply to
      businesses and professions. The information can be used to help identify
      and prioritize the state's efforts in developing its business portal. Future
      uses could include a searchable database of forms.

      Rick Becker reviewed the changes to the draft form since the last meeting.
      The draft form is on the following website: www.nitc.state.ne.us/inventory.
      Discussion identified some additional changes:
         a. Include whether notarization is required
         b. Include whether fees are required by statute

     c. Include option of providing both interactive and downloadable forms online

     d. Include option for the URL of a document explaining the form

     e. Provide option for amending information in the form after it is entered.

There were also suggestions for reflecting the business life cycle (new business, etc.) and the amount of the fee. The complexities of these questions (for example, some fees are on a sliding scale or are subject to change) make them difficult to include in a basic inventory.

The use of industry codes was discussed. Several participants pointed out that the industry categories listed is very broad and not always that meaningful. Eventually, a more useable set of categories may be needed. There was some consideration to dropping this part of the survey form, but the group finally decided to keep it because some breakdown of the many forms that exist will be essential to any analysis.

HHS explained their logistical difficulty in providing complete information on a large number of forms (HHS Credentialing, alone, has 252 forms.) Steve Schafer will meet with HHS to work out a manageable solution.

By the end of this week, Steve Schafer will send a letter to agency directors requesting their cooperation in providing this information. He will copy agency technology contacts.

2. Private sector focus groups
Rod Armstrong reported on a proposed a three-part plan for soliciting input from the private sector.
     a. Solicit suggestions that agencies have already received from businesses
     b. Post a form on the state's website to invite suggestions
     c. Organize focus groups

Rod emphasized the need for focus groups to have a defined purpose and something to react to.

C. Demonstration of business portals
Rick Becker demonstrated Maryland's web site for regulatory information (http://www.mdbusiness.state.md.us/) and their searchable Business License Information System (BLIS) in particular (http://www.blis.state.md.us/). He also gave an overview of Pennsylvania's Open for Business web site (http://www.paOpen for Business.state.pa.us/). Steve Williams showed the information available from DED's Toolkit website: http://assist.neded.org/.

All three sites offer different approaches to the same goal of providing easy access to government information and services for business. Maryland's web site provides four broad categories of information, including BLIS, an alphabetized list of occupational licenses, an alphabetized list of state licenses and permits, and business start up information. BLIS is an interactive application that presents a list of licenses, permits, and links to information that is customized to the users' specific situation, based on responses to a series of questions.

Pennsylvania's Open for Business includes a form "wizard" which leads the user through a series of questions. Based on the answers, the wizard places required forms in the users "briefcase". At the end of the session, the briefcase includes only those forms that apply to the user's situation. The Pennsylvania site also offers a list of forms in alphabetical order or organized by categories. The user can access specific forms and accompanying explanatory information and place them in the user's briefcase. One can also register for e-mail notifications about PA Open For Business Events and Activities.

Nebraska's Toolkit for Business provides an extensive list of links on a broad range of topics. The links reflect the information that businesses most commonly look for.

Reaction to the demonstrations included the observation that Nebraska's site already provides access to an extensive range of resources. Other comments included a concern about implementation and support issues, especially for centralized systems.

D. Identify short term goals/projects
   1. Agencies should provide contact information on their web sites to make it easy for users to get the information they need or answers to specific questions. Agencies should strive to respond to inquiries within stated timeframes.
   2. Make enhancements to the state's existing portal and Toolkit for Business.
   3. Request agencies to provide four types of information on each topic affecting business including copies of forms, statute, regulations, and contact information.
   4. There should be a means to coordinate changes to URLs so that links on other pages to those sites can be updated.

E. Identify long term goals/projects
   1. Provide a centralized help function (editor's note: Washington State today announced their new 24-hour customer support through SafeHarbor

Technology Corporation. "Safeharbor will provide 24-hour online and traditional customer support capabilities to assist the state in offering enhanced customer support to its citizens and businesses. SafeHarbor provides seamless customer support through their web-based graphical KnowledgeBASE; or via email, telephone or chat rooms. SafeHarbor's knowledge database captures repeated inquiries, and provides answers to those questions online in visual, graphical formats.")

2. Enhance downloadable forms by putting them in a format, which allows the user to complete the form on their PC, before printing it.
3. Provide an explanation and instructions for forms, which is searchable by keywords.
4. Review the need for certain forms and explore opportunities to change work flow and business processes, or the information that is required. Some changes will require legislation.
5. Be sure security is addressed.
6. Develop a strategy for sharing common data elements and avoid redundant data entry both within an agency and across applications of different agencies. The goal is to allow the automatic population of common data fields.
7. Provide integration with local government.

F. Work Plan / Timeline (all times are from 10:00 to noon)
1. January 10:   Develop draft short term goals
2. January 24:   Begin work on long term goals (DOL conference room)
3. **February 7: Review inventory results (DOL conference room)**
   Review and revise short and long term goals
4. February 21:   Review Draft Action Plan (DOL conference room)
5. February 28:   Recommend Final Action Plan (location TBA)