NSRB Grant Application Template

Agencies desiring grants from the NSRB for projects to improve access to state government information should complete this application and follow any procedures outlined in this application and any accompanying materials.

1. Name of agency applying for grant

Chief Information Officer

2. Title or brief description of the project

Business Portal Phase II

3. Grant request amount

$25,000

4. Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project?

The system will provide access to existing services for which there may be a fee, but the project itself does not involve fees.

5. If yes, provide any statutory reference or authorization for the fee

N/A

6. Please describe the project in detail

Governor Johanns has initiated an effort to implement a business portal, Nebrask@ Online for Business, to provide a virtual one-stop-shop for government services and information of interest to Nebraska businesses. The NSRB approved grant funds for Phase I of the project, which should be completed by early February, 2002. The purpose of this grant request is to support Phase II, which includes training sessions for development professionals and businesses in using the business portal; implementation of a maintenance plan for keeping the portal's business forms inventory current and accurate; and continuation of an aggressive strategy to automate (place online) government forms used by businesses.

By the end of Phase I, the Nebrask@ Online for Business web site will be complete, including a vast array of information resources useful to businesses and development professionals; an online inventory of government forms used by businesses (searchable by several criteria); a "portfolio wizard" that retrieves form information from the inventory based on business type; a recommended process for maintenance of the forms inventory database; and a recommended, tested solution for large-scale, rapid forms automation. Focus group sessions with businesses and development professionals were

held in seven locations (nine sessions) throughout the state to gather input during the development process.

Phase II is intended to ramp up use of the portal by providing training sessions throughout the state for development organizations and businesses. During the focus group meetings, considerable interest was expressed in a second round of meetings once the site is live. Local chambers of commerce and other statewide associations have offered their assistance in generating interest and attendance at these training sessions. $4,000 of the grant funds requested will support this initiative.

Success of the business forms portion of the portal will depend on maintaining current and accurate information in the forms inventory database. $1,000 of the requested grant funds will support implementation of the database maintenance strategy, which will be supported on an ongoing basis by existing agency and NOL resources.

The most substantial portion of the requested grant funds ($20,000) will support aggressive implementation of forms automation. One goal stated in the Governor's Business Portal Action Plan is that citizens and businesses should be able to conduct transactions with government agencies electronically. Since most of these transactions involve completion of some type of form, it follows that making these forms available online is a necessary component. Several action items in the plan address this requirement.

Of the more than 1,200 entries in the forms inventory database, only 1/3 are available online in any form. The vast majority of these are download-and-print, with less than 3% available in an interactive format (able to be completed online and either printed & mailed or transmitted electronically).

The forms automation strategy relies in part on standard PDF technology, applied in a manner that allows completion of a form online and capturing data in a standard Adobe format (FDF). The strategy also incorporates development of forms in HTML format (i.e., web page language), also allowing data capture in a standard format (text files or XML). In all instances, the data capture format will allow for electronic transmission and provide a foundation for integration of the data into agency back-end systems.

The strategy provides a process and tool set to address the first two phases of forms automation identified by the Electronic Forms Automation work group. This group was chartered by the NITC State Government Council to work with agencies in assessing requirements for forms automation, and to assess the market for existing products to move the initiative forward. The group identified three levels of forms automation:

- *Level I – electronic access to forms, which can be printed and delivered.*
- *Level II – electronic access to forms, which can be electronically completed, printed and delivered.*

- *Level III – electronic exchange (computer-to-computer) of information/data without the elements of human intervention. The objective is to directly transfer data through electronic means, efficiently and effectively.*

This investment will provide the resources for substantial progress in forms automation in the Level I and Level II areas, and some aspects of Level III in which a form can be completed and transmitted electronically. Other aspects of Level III, such as full process integration and enhanced features like GIS and graphic attachments, are outside the scope of this effort. However, the work undertaken through this grant will provide the foundation for Level III efforts. The standardized nature of the forms automation approach provides flexibility for agencies to take initiative to complete their own work if so desired, and still achieve the same end result.

7. Please describe whom the beneficiary or recipient of this service will be and projected activity for access or use of the proposed service

Companies doing business in Nebraska complete thousands of transactions with government each year, from filing tax returns to registering products and licensing professionals and facilities. Providing one-stop access to these services, as well as information of use to businesses and development professionals, will provide countless benefits. In addition, agency efficiency will improve through the gradual movement of information and services from paper to the web. As with many online services, initial activity through the site may be small until the service is well-publicized and businesses become accustomed to using it. Over time, however, use of the site and associated information and services should grow substantially. As a basis of comparison, annual network traffic for Nebrask@ Online should approach 90 million hits in 2001.

8. Estimated timeline for completion

Implementation of the forms inventory maintenance plan should be complete by the end of April, 2002, although some ongoing aspects such as monitoring the inventory for broken links, will being once the portal is launched. Target date for launch is early- to mid-February. Training sessions for businesses and development professionals on uses of the business portal should be completed by the end of June, 2002. The grant will support work on forms automation through October, 2002. Depending on the degree of progress at that point, some additional grant resources may be necessary to complete this aspect of the project.

9. Agency contribution to the project (labor, equipment, etc.)

The CIO and staff will provide ongoing project oversight, communication with policy makers and agencies, and other staff assistance as required. Forms automation work, implementation of forms inventory maintenance, and business portal marketing will be carried out by Nebrask@ Online.

10. A. Has this project every been submitted as a budget request (explain)?

No. The investment associated with this project will be one-time expenses to automate government forms, support initial marketing of the business portal, and implement processes for ongoing maintenance of the forms inventory.

10. B. Does the project require additional statutory authority (explain)?

No.

10. C. Why is the grant money needed for the project, and if applicable, how will the service be sustained once the grant money is expended?

The nature of the business portal project – improving electronic access to government services for Nebraska's business community – is clearly within the scope of the NSRB's mission. The NSRB provided grant funding for Phase I of the project, which included development of the portal web site, development of the forms inventory database, focus groups to gather business input into portal development, and assisting agencies with completing and editing entries into the forms database. Phase I also supported research and development that resulted in the recommended approach to forms automation.

Phase II will support continuation of an aggressive effort to automate the more than 1,200 forms accessible through the portal, assist in training development professionals and businesses in various uses of the portal, and implement an ongoing maintenance process. Following full implementation, it is anticipated that ongoing maintenance of the portal will be accomplished within existing resources of agencies and Nebrask@ Online.

11. Please describe how this project will enhance the delivery of state agency services or access to those services.

Full implementation of Nebrask@ Online for Business will provide a virtual one-stop-shop for business information and access to government services. Automation of the hundreds of forms used by agencies in their interactions with businesses will save time and money, both for the agency and for the business. Forms can be accessed via the web, completed online and transmitted electronically. Subsequent integration of this information into agency back-end systems (not part of this grant) will automate entire processes to the greatest extent possible, improving efficiency and saving money.

12. Please describe how this project will 1) improve the efficiency of agency operations; 2) facilitate collaboration among state agencies; 3) facilitate collaboration between state agencies and other public institutions; 4) support public/private partnerships in the delivery of public services   (you may respond to any or all of these criteria in your answer)

Providing information and services online has been shown to reduce phone calls and mail requests directed toward agency staff. Electronic transmission of data collected via forms will reduce postage costs, and with subsequent back-end integration and error

checking, will also reduce redundant data entry and instances of incomplete or incorrect information that require follow-up. Capturing data in a standard electronic format has the potential to improve data sharing among agencies. The involvement of Nebrask@ Online further enhances the ongoing public/private partnership in the delivery of public services.

13. Contact person information

Steve Schafer, Chief Information Officer
521 South 14th Street, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508-2707
(402) 471-4385
slschafe@notes.state.ne.us

Work Plan, Time Line and Budget
Governor's Business Portal Initiative – Phase II

Training for Businesses & Development Professionals

Tasks/Timelines
- Identify potential locations and available dates (February)
- Contact local chambers of commerce & statewide associations for assistance in recruiting participants (February/March)
- Send invitations/promotional materials (March/April)
- Develop training materials and program (March/April)
- Finalize logistic details (April)
- Conduct training sessions (May/June)

Budget
Facilities rental (15 @ $50 ea.)	750.00
Meeting refreshments (15 @ $50 ea.)	750.00
Mileage (2000 @ $0.345/mile)	690.00
Lodging (6 nights, 2 people @ $75/ea.)	900.00
Meals (9 days, 2 people @ $35/ea.)	630.00
Printing & Postage	280.00
Total	4,000.00

Implementation of Forms Inventory Database Maintenance Strategy

Tasks/Timelines
- Complete strategy development (February)
- Communicate strategy to agencies through meetings & other means (February/March)
- Develop e-mail communications (push) capability (March/April)
- Develop inventory edit capability and rules for use & administration (March/April)
- Monitor inventory for broken links to forms & agency websites (March – Ongoing)
- Implement e-mail push to agency contacts requesting updates if needed (April – Ongoing)

Budget

Development staff resources for inventory edit & e-mail push applications	1,000
Total	1,000

Forms Automation

Tasks/Timelines
- Complete strategy and processes, including groupings and priorities for forms to be automated (January)
- Communicate strategy and process options to agencies and appropriate committees, work groups, etc. (January/February)
- Implement strategy (February – October)

Budget

Staff resources (2,500/mo. over 8 months)	<u>20,000</u>
Total	20,000

Total Grant Request	**25,000**