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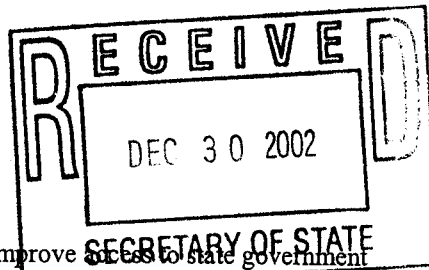
Agencies desiring grants form the Nebraska State Records Board for projects to improve access to state government information should complete this application and follow any procedures outlined in this application and any accompanying materials.

1. Name of agency applying for grant.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension **conNEcting Nebraska Technology** team.

Over the next two years the educational partners of:
◆ University of Nebraska Center for Applied Rural Innovation
◆ University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension
◆ *conNEcting Nebraska Technology Training Team*
will provide an educational training program called *Access e-Government* for local elected officials in county/city governments across Nebraska.

University of Nebraska Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI), is a team of professionals who have developed some of the most community-driven and impact-oriented programs focusing on rural viability in the world. The professionals who make up the CARI organization within the University of Nebraska system are located on the University campus as well as across the state. This team-oriented structure is designed to model a successful community. The CARI programs developed are based on empirical research, best practices and local citizen input.

Released in October 2002, the CARI "Nebraska Rural Poll"states the use of telecommunications technologies in rural Nebraska has changed dramatically during the past five years. In 1997, only 13% of the respondents said they regularly used e-mail. In 2002, 42% regularly use e-mail. This total increases to 60% when all categories of email users are included. In 1997, only 8% of rural Nebraskans regularly accessed the "World Wide Web." In 2002, the regular users has increased to 43%. When including all respondent replies for WWW usage, this number jumps to 62%. Of the 10 technologies included in the Rural Poll, those with the highest increase in usage include: Internet access, e-mail and a personal computer.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension provides educational programming across all 93 counties in the state. Staff are located on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) East Campus; at Research and Extension Centers located at Norfolk, Lincoln, North Platte and Scottsbluff; and at 83 county or multi-county offices throughout the state. Cooperative Extension makes more than 1.5 million educational contacts each year with Nebraska citizens.

conNEcting Nebraska is a team of University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educators assigned to coordinate and teach information technology education and programs for Nebraska. The goals of the team are to manage and deliver community-based technology programs across the state. Training and developing curriculum are necessary components of these goals.

The conNEcting Nebraska team currently offers two successful programs, both of which provides hands-on computer training.

◆Master Navigator, developed in Nebraska, includes four three-hour hands-on classes to help individuals learn the basics of using the Internet.

◆Nebraska Electronic Main Street teaches business owners and managers how to use the World Wide Web for business expansion. It gives them an understanding of e-commerce and introduces them to the many business uses of the Internet.

The professionals of the *conNEct Nebraska* team are based in out-state Nebraska and have the expertise to help local officials learn about website development/upgrade, content, maintenance, and upgrading through the new **Access e-Government** curriculum.

Other partners of this E-Gov effort include:
◆ Nebraska Online
◆ Nebraska Secretary of State Office
◆ Nebraska Information Technology Commission
◆ Technologies Across Nebraska
◆ University of Minnesota

Nebraska Online staff and the conNEcting team have collaborated on educational content for the training. The *conNEct* team is aware of the Nebrask@Online county web page development and will promote counties working with Nebraska Online for future technology applications. The investment funds of 2003 grant funds for the **Access e-Government** will support and enhance the previous investment of funds provided to Nebrask@ Online for county web development. This curriculum will increase local understanding of the importance of e-Government and it's tie to the services of state government and will hasten the development of local government sites

Access e-Government curriculum was introduced to elected officials at the Nebraska Association of County Officials Annual Convention in Omaha. Further discussions are taking place with NACO officials for the potential of future partnering.

2. *Title or brief description of the project*

Access eGovernment

Businesses have been using the power of the Internet to reach their customers effectively. Now local governments are exploring the same opportunities to communicate with their public. Most of the 90,000 local governments in the U.S., however, are small, and many lack local resources to design and maintain a website. Access e-Government shows local governments how to find those resources, how to plan information-rich websites to transact business and communicate with their citizens. Through an on-line tutorial, Access e-Government explains the content, services, technology, politics and issues specific to e-Government. It provides samples of other government websites throughout the nation, criteria for evaluating websites, suggestions for website content, links to services that support disseminating public information, suggestions for

website design, and discussions of privacy and disability issues.

Local governments must follow the State of Nebraska's lead in developing e-Government. The recent announcement of President Bush signing legislation aimed at improving online access to federal government information and services is another indication of the importance of delivering government information and services at "Internet speed.".

3. *Grant request amount* $25,000

Grant funds will be used for:
◆ Payment of yearly curriculum contract fee to the University of Minnesota - $2500. This allows for regular curriculum updates and immediate on-line access to updates.
◆ The cost of providing each of the hands-on workshops at the local level. The cost estimate is $300 per session. This amount includes printed materials, travel costs and other expenses incurred. By obtaining grant funds, Extension Educators will be able to provide this educational opportunity to the local level at no cost.
◆ As future additional educational needs are identified through the e-Government training process, grant funds will be used to developed curricula. Potential topics may include, but are not limited: GIS, local budgeting for technology, records management, broadband access, accessability, and complete information services.

4. *Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project?* No

The grant funds would allow Extension personnel to travel throughout the state to facilitate and teach the Access e-Government training for local government entities who are desiring to build or update their e-gov web pages and services. The grant dollars will fund:
◆ The payment of the contract fee with the University of Minnesota for curriculum rights
◆ Printed curriculum resources for county officials
◆ Travel/mileage expenses for Extension Educators who teach/facilitate workshops at local sites throughout Nebraska. Educators will attempt to schedule workshops in their geographic region of the state to minimize travel costs. Educators located in the various regions of the state understand their locale and have connections with local government.

5. *If yes, provide any statutory reference or authorization for the fee.* N/A

Please describe the project in detail.

Access e-Government is an educational opportunity for county and city elected officials, county commissioners/supervisors, department heads, IT staff, and community citizens who are interested in developing and/or updating local governmental websites.

It begins with a one-hour Quick Tour of Access e-Government to alert officials about the importance and potential of e-government. It will introduce officials to the "real world" of E-Gov and create an urgency for them to move forward.

Following the introductory session, local governments can choose to participate in hands-on workshops by choosing one or more of the following topics:

◆ What Governments are Doing – an exploration of governmental sites in the country to discover both poorly designed sites/content and good sites.

◆ What People Want – discovery of content, forms and services, what different audiences want, and look at ways to engage citizens.

◆ Security and Privacy Issues – participants will see the impacts of breaches of security and privacy on government sites.

◆ Website Design and Hosting: Outsourcing Web Applications – helps participants discuss design, navigation, accessibility etc. and whether or not they want to design and host the site, or to use template-based vendors.

This education program is designed for smaller county and city governments. It is targeted toward those who are working to create a website or to update and re-design their website. This curriculum provides a basic understanding of how to create good government websites and helps local officials understand what topics/information they should consider, and what questions to ask before developing a web presence.

The program incorporates an online guide with a local education program complete with printed resources. The online guide can be used for personal learning and background information. In addition, Extension faculty are offering to lead a county team of employees and citizens through hands-on learning workshops. The workshops will give people an opportunity to see what others around the state and country are doing, discuss security and privacy concerns, and learn about some very useful tools.

This program does not build web sites for local officials. Access e-Government will promote the technical services of Nebraska Online when the local governments are ready to develop or upgrade their website.

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

The ultimate beneficiaries will be:

◆ Citizens and businesses of Nebraska as they use convenient governmental websites to access information and transact business with their local government.

◆ Citizens and businesses based outside the state will also be able to access governmental information or execute transactions with Nebraska governmental entities.

◆ Agencies and governmental departments will become more efficient by accessing information from various governmental sites and participate in inter-departmental/agency communication.

◆ Local governments will benefit as they improve customer service and enhance operational efficiency.

8. Timeline for implementation (specific completion date must be provide, grant funds lapse if not expended prior to completion date)

May 1, 2003 - 20 counties will be introduced to Access E-Gov
October 1, 2003 - 10 counties will have completed the entire course
October 1, 2003 - four counties will be engaged in creating or enhancing their websites
2004 – continued training across the state
2004 - development of additional curricula as needed
 Evaluation of this training process will be on-going as we work with local officials. Communication between team members will alter the process of educational topics and delivery if necessary.

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

Cooperative Extension staff will contribute professional expertise and time to plan, facilitate, monitor and evaluate this project. Extension Educators will utilize Cooperative Extension equipment and/or secure cooperation with other agencies/organizations for the use of technological equipment and bandwidth needed for instruction.

10 a. Has this project ever been submitted as a budget request (explain.) No.
Although previous NSRB funds have been allocated for web development, hardware, software, and technical expertise etc., this educational initiative fits well within the Nebraska State Records Board goal for one time funding of small projects aimed at improving electronic access to state government information and services. Education is part of the continuum for developing E-government services.

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 one the grant money is expended?

This round of funding will help local governments become better educated to use and develop full-service web sites from those front pages. It is anticipated that local governments will continue networking with Nebrask@ Online to access software that will allow citizens to transact business on local governmental pages.

Once local governmental officials are trained there will not be a need for continued monetary support.

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

Citizenry will use government web portals if they are customer-centered, and user friendly. Web sites must include easy to find, readable, authoritative, and up-to-date content. Access e-

Government will help local government officials realize what criteria needs to be considered when building a website to make it accessible and convenient for users.

12. Please describe how this project will
  1.) Improve the efficiency of agency operations;
  2.) Facilitate collaboration among state agencies;
  3.) Facilitate collaboration among state agencies and other public institutions; and or
    Support public/private partnerships in the delivery of public services.

Citizens will be able to access more and more public services, delivered online, anytime, anywhere as governmental entities work toward integration and seamless service through the use of technology. Collaborators on this project are:
  ◆University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension
  ◆University of Nebraska Center for Applied Rural Innovation
  ◆ Nebrask@Online
  ◆ Nebraska Secretary of State Office
  ◆ Nebraska Information Technology Commission
  ◆ Technologies Across Nebraska
  ◆ University of Minnesota
  ◆ (Potential Partner) Nebraska Association of County Officials.

13. Contact person for any questions regarding this application

Phyllis Schoenholz, Extension Educator   **pschoenholz1@unl.edu**
University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension
225 North 4ᵗʰ, Hebron, NE

phone - 402-225-2381
fax - 402-768-7213

Signed this _____26_____ day of _December, 2002_

John C. Allen
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CARI Director