NSRB Grant Application
Public Meeting Calendar Upgrade

1. Name of agency applying for grant

Chief Information Officer

2. Title or brief description of the project

Public Meeting Calendar Upgrade

3. Grant request amount

$15,000

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

No

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

N/A

6. Please describe the project in detail

Nebrask@ Online has hosted an online Public Meeting Calendar since 1999. The calendar allows agency staff to add and update listings for public meetings, and includes links to agendas and other meeting materials. The public can review information posted to the calendar and search by several criteria including date, agency, and meeting type.

E-mail notification capability was recently added, called nebAnnounce. Interested citizens can register to receive e-mail notification whenever an event is added to the calendar that matches a profile they set up. The e-mail notification includes a link to event details.

With greater use by state agencies, the Public Meeting Calendar is becoming a comprehensive repository of official meetings that the public can depend on for timely notification and easy access to information such as agendas. nebAnnounce was a major improvement, but other enhancements are needed to make the Public Meeting Calendar more useful. These include:

- Adding "granularity" to the nebAnnounce feature so that users may be more specific in what meetings to include in their notification profile. For example, anyone designating HHSS would receive dozens of notifications on topics that might be of no interest.
- Adding an archiving feature for removing old meetings from the system.

- Adopt a naming convention with corresponding edits for the "List of Activities" to make this a more useable field.
- Create a feature for entering recurring events into the system.
- Allow agencies to file attachments, such as agendas, minutes or meeting materials.
- Provide additional fields that agencies need.
- Create additional categories and allow users to screen events by those categories. An example of additional categories would be county government, city government, school districts, etc.

Given the system's age and requests for additional enhancements received from agency staff, NOL recommends that a project be undertaken to identify and organize requests for enhancements, develop requirements and specifications for a system upgrade, and implement the upgrade.

The existing Public Meeting Calendar system was modified from a version used in the Commonwealth of Virginia and is nearly five years old. Technical limitations and a need for some content guidelines regarding how agencies input information demonstrate that an upgrade is in order. The system will continue to provide a standard Web interface for both agencies and the public, providing ease of use both for those who post information and those who view it. Upgrades will allow more granular selection of options for e-mail notification, down to a greater level of detail below the agency level.

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 general public and those interested in monitoring public meetings benefit from a one-stop Web site where information regarding public meetings is posted. With the addition of nebAnnounce, citizens can receive e-mail notification when meetings or events matching their profile are posted to the calendar. The additional enhancements will improve the usefulness of this feature and the overall system. The enhancements will also make it easier for agencies to use the system.

8. Estimated timeline for completion

Work is expected to begin in May 2004, starting with development of a Project Charter, soliciting input from agencies and citizens on possible enhancements, and development of system specifications. Development work is expected to begin in mid-June, with completion, testing and launch of the enhanced system anticipated by early September. The time required for development and testing is dependent upon the requirements identified in early stages of the project, so the launch date is an estimate and may be revised once system specifications are developed.

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

Agencies will continue existing efforts to post meeting and event information to the calendar. All design and development work associated with the upgrade will be done by Nebrask@ Online.

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

No.

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?

Initial development and maintenance of the system has been subsidized by general network revenue since 1999. This project constitutes a significant review and upgrade of the system, and grant funding is warranted. Long-term, the NSRB may wish to review how ongoing maintenance and periodic upgrade of the system is supported.

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

Online posting of and e-mail notification about public meetings and events significantly enhances public access to the workings of various agencies, boards and commissions.

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)

The Public Meeting Calendar and nebAnnounce represent a strong commitment by the State to enhancing digital democracy in Nebraska. Citizens can more easily stay informed about meetings and events in which they have an interest. With the ability to post meeting agendas and other information to the Web, costs associated with printing, mailing and related activities can be reduced. The work being done by Nebrask@ Online continues the long-standing public/private partnership in the delivery of public services.

13. Contact person information

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