

Project Title: Web Site Development for People Attraction

Submitting Entity: University of Nebraska

Grant Amount Requested: \$34,483

Project Contact Information:

Connie Hancock
University of NE Extension
Extension Educator
920 Jackson St.
Sidney, NE 69162
308-254-4455
chancock1@unl.edu

Anne Byers
Community IT Manager
Nebraska Information Technology Commission
521 South 14th Street
Lincoln, NE 68521
402-471-3805

Tim O'Brien
Business Consultant - Information Technology
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94666
Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
Cell: 402.326.3104
tim.obrien@nebraska.gov

Executive Summary

Faced with a tight labor pool, Nebraska communities are starting to realize that recruitment of individuals and families is in many ways as important as the recruitment of businesses. However, most Nebraska communities are not effectively marketing themselves to prospective new residents. A recent survey of economic development professionals in Nebraska and neighboring states revealed that only 22% of respondents indicated that their community Web site was effective in new resident recruitment.

The Community Web Site Development for People Attraction project will provide assistance to Nebraska communities in developing Web sites which effectively market communities to prospective new residents. The project will consist of several components including course and material development, train the trainer training, a pilot of course materials with 2 communities, an outreach program which will provide assistance to 10 communities, accessibility testing of Web sites, marketing assistance, and a recognition program for outstanding community Web sites. Project partners include the Department of Economic Development, University of Nebraska Extension, NPPD, AIM Institute, and the NITC Community Council. Grant funds requested will provide funding for a part-time intern to assist with the project, travel to communities, printing of materials, webinars, and awards for the recognition program. This project will enhance the capability of Nebraska's communities to attract workers necessary for business expansion and economic development. As identified in a Nebraska Department of Economic Development survey, the annual economic impact in terms of salaries paid to ten new workers at \$20.51 per hour would be \$393,800.

1. Describe the project and project goals.

Project Description

Faced with a tight labor pool, Nebraska communities are starting to realize that recruitment of individuals and families is in many ways as important as the recruitment of businesses. The Internet is increasingly used by individuals as a resource in important life decisions, including relocation decisions. First impressions of a community are often based on that community's Web site. However, most Nebraska communities are not effectively marketing themselves to prospective new residents. A recent survey of economic development professionals in Nebraska and neighboring states revealed that only 22% of respondents indicated that their community Web site was effective in new-resident recruitment. Less than forty percent of respondents felt that their community Web site was user-friendly for potential new residents.

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Project Goals

- To help 12 communities address the need for talent by developing Web sites which effectively market the community to prospective new residents.
- To help communities understand the importance of a Web presence and to better brand and market their community.
- To help communities create a Web presence that provides a positive first impression.
- To help communities minimize maintenance costs and time by using easily maintained, low-or-no-cost open source software.
- To enhance the delivery of community information with the use of Web 2.0 tools.

2. Describe the project team and project activities.

Project Partners and Team

Project partners include the Department of Economic Development, University of Nebraska Extension, NPPD, AIM Institute, and the NITC Community Council.

Members of the project team include:

- ◆ Tim O'Brien, Information Technology
Business Consultant, Nebraska Department of Economic Development

- ◆ Connie Hancock, Extension Educator, University of Nebraska Extension—Cheyenne County
- ◆ Jenny Overhue, Economic Research Specialist, NPPD
- ◆ Anne Byers, Community IT Manager, Nebraska Information Technology Commission
- ◆ Rod Armstrong, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, AIM Institute
- ◆ Darla Heggem, Employee Recruitment Manager, Twin Cities Development Association
- ◆ Norene Fitzgerald, Economic Developer

Additionally, an intern will be hired and housed at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to provide assistance with this project. Responsibilities of the intern will include:

- Assisting and managing the NITC web development project
 - Assisting in creation of the manual/process
 - Managing the selected communities
 - Assisting with training
 - Performing other duties TBD
- Conducting and managing market research with regards to people attraction
 - Demographics, new residents, current residents, attitudes, trends, ect.
 - including IT community assessment, web development
- Performing Other duties TBD

Project Activities

Course and Material Development. A training manual will be developed for participating communities. Materials will also be available to communities who choose not to participate or are not selected. Materials will be reviewed by local community development practitioners for usability. In addition, community Web site templates will be developed for use by participating communities.

Train the Trainer Training. DED field representatives, University of Nebraska Extension educators, NPPD staff, and other resource providers will receive training on community Web site development for people attraction. Training sessions will be held in Lincoln and North Platte. Training will be provided by Tim O'Brien, Connie Hancock, and Jenny Overhue.

Web Site Development Pilot. Course materials will be piloted with two communities prior to the roll out of the outreach program.

Awareness Sessions. Two sessions addressing the importance of effective community Web sites as an economic development tool will be held in early September prior to the application deadline. These will be presented as a webinars using the University of Nebraska's Breeze

system in order to allow participation from all areas of the state.

Web Site Development Outreach. The Community Web Site Development for People Attraction project will provide training and assistance in developing effective community Web sites to ten Nebraska communities chosen through a competitive application process. Members of the Community Council and project partners will be asked to serve on the selection committee. Three training sessions will be provided in each participating community, focusing on identifying and developing content for inclusion in the community Web site. Communities will receive assistance in using open-source content management software to develop and maintain their Web sites. Participants will also receive training in marketing their Web sites and in developing a multiple contact strategy for recruiting prospective new residents. Ongoing assistance will be provided via telephone and e-mail.

Accessibility Testing. Web sites developed through the project will be tested for accessibility by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Testing will be done by the State of Nebraska's Office of the CIO's accessibility specialist.

Marketing Assistance. Two webinars on marketing communities and community Web sites will be offered using the University of Nebraska's Breeze system.

Community Web Site Critique and Recognition. In order to build awareness about the importance of a community Web presence, project partners will develop a program to critique community Web sites and to those Web sites which excel in providing community information to prospective new residents.

3. Describe the expected outcomes and benefits.

Expected Outcomes

- Resource providers will receive training on Web site development for people recruitment.
- Resource providers will better understand the importance of Web sites as a tool to recruit new residents.
- 12 Nebraska communities will develop more effective Web sites for people attraction.
- Participating communities will better understand the importance of people attraction activities, including Web site development, to economic development opportunities.
- People attraction efforts will be enhanced.
- Materials will be developed and made available to help Nebraska communities develop more effective Web sites for people recruitment.
- Participating communities will utilize Web 2.0 technologies for delivery of community information.

Benefits

This project will enhance the capability of Nebraska's communities to attract workers necessary for business expansion and economic development. New residents often possess the high-level skills needed for business expansion. A recent survey of new residents to the Panhandle found that 44% had professional and related occupation skills and 41% had management, business and financial operations skills. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development identified 2,656 available jobs paying over \$20.51 in Nebraska that were unfilled. The fiscal impact of 2656 recruit hires working at \$20.51 per hour would be \$104,591,155 per year just in salaries.

If a community recruited ten workers at \$20.51 per hour, the economic impact to that community in terms of salaries paid would be \$393,800.

Scottsbluff and Gering have reported success with their employee recruitment Web site, www.wehavejobs.net. The Web site was created in partnership with the AIM Institute and is modeled after the www.careerlink.com site.

Darla Heggem, Employee Recruitment Manager, Twin Cities Development Association states:

“Since its launch less than one year ago, over local 50 employers have posted available job opportunities. Many of these businesses have experienced success in finding employees from California, Virginia, Texas, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Idaho, and South Dakota to fill these vacancies. Many applicants are alumni of the area who are looking to move home to be closer to family. Other applicants are simply looking for different lifestyle offering a higher quality of life. One employer hired an Engineer from Egypt who found the job opportunity on the site!

The site also provides listings for available housing, educational opportunities, healthcare, things to do, and many of the recreational opportunities in our area. Our ‘One-Stop Shop’ package is completed with dozens of great vibrant photographs providing a strong visual image of the quality of life in western Nebraska.

Currently the site contains over 200 jobs available in the community. Dozens of applicants from outside of Nebraska have applied for many of these positions indicating a strong interest in moving to our community...7 in the past week! One applicant from Philadelphia emailed us that she was very impressed with the site, stating it was representative of a strong, progressive community. Our community website has become an invaluable recruiting tool in attracting people to the Scottsbluff/Gering area.”

New residents also bring many assets to communities, strengthening the local economy. A recent survey by University of Nebraska researchers found that new residents to the Panhandle region had the following assets: high levels of education, children, professional occupation skills, entrepreneurial backgrounds, and volunteer and community leadership experience. Nearly half of the new residents surveyed reported having household incomes of \$50,000 or more. In comparison, 28 percent of current Panhandle residents have household incomes of \$50,000 or more.

4. List the major activities (or milestones) and a timeline for completing each activity or milestone.

June

Publish guidelines and announce the program
Develop program materials

July

Develop program materials
Organize Train the Trainer sessions

August 2008

Conduct train the trainer training
Pilot materials with pilot communities
Plan awareness webinars

September 2008

Select communities to participate
Community Web site nominations due
Present awareness webinars

October 2008

Conduct training

November 2008

Conduct training
Announce community Web site awards

December 2008

Conduct training

January-April 2009

Provide support to communities
Plan marketing webinars
Present marketing webinars

May 2009

Evaluate the program

May 2010

Contact participating communities to collect one-year evaluation data

5. Describe how the project will be sustained.

This program will build capacity by developing training materials which can be used by communities and by training other resource providers. The Department of Economic Development has agreed to fund an intern to assist with the program the following year (2009-2010). Without grant funding, the program can continue to be offered to communities. Some modifications may need to be made, including the use of distance education technologies, to reduce travel costs. A small program fee may also have to be implemented.

6. Describe the project's evaluation plan, including measurement and assessment methods that will verify project outcomes.

The program will be evaluated by several methods including:

- Pretest and post test by training participants on technology skills and attitudes toward technology
- Discussion with participants after the completion of the program
- Pretest and posttest evaluation of Web sites
- Number of prospective new residents contacting the community
- Web site analysis and online surveys of Web visitors

Financial Analysis and Budget

The budget will be scored on reasonableness (up to 5 points) and mathematical accuracy (up to 5 points).

Provide the following financial information:

	CTF Grant Funding	Cash Match (5)	In-Kind Match (6)	Other Funding Sources (7)	Total
Personnel Costs(1)	\$15,000		\$48,750		
Contractual Services (2)	\$720				
Capital Expenditures (3) (Hardware, software, etc.)					
Supplies and Materials	printing \$600 awards \$150				
Telecommunications	\$720 \$1440	\$1560 \$3120	\$3120		
Training					
Travel	\$16,573		\$740		
Other costs (4)					
TOTAL	\$34,483		\$49,490		

Financial Narrative Notes

Personnel Costs—Grant-funded

Intern housed at the Department of Economic Development

\$12/hour X 25 hours/week X 50 weeks = \$15,000

Personnel Costs—In-kind Personnel

This project would require one .75 FTE if performed by one person. $.75 \times 45,000 \times 1.3$ (for fringe benefits) = \$48,750

Contractual Services

Web accessibility Testing
12 sites X \$60/hour X 1 hour = \$720

Supplies and Materials

Printing \$600

250 copies
Cover Sheet
bindings (spiral or something like that)
clear acetate cover (to protect and look professional)
40 pages, duplexed
Color cover, b&w content

Awards \$150

4 @ \$37.50

Telecommunications

Charges for toll-free phone line
 $\$.06/\text{minute} \times 60 \text{ minutes} \times 100 \text{ participants} \times 2 \text{ Webinars} = \720

Travel

2 people X 12 communities X 3 sessions X 200 miles X \$.505 X 2 ways	14544
Lodging/food \$800	800
Travel to NCIP/NRI=	429
Travel to Train the Trainer	800
	16573

In-kind Travel

Travel for Anne, Jenny and Rod to Train the Trainer sessions in Lincoln and North Platte

Lincoln to North Platte	226
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Columbus to Lincoln	76
Columbus to North Platte	212
	740