IT Project : Election Night Reporting / Candidate Module System

General Section

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City :	Lincoln			**NITC Score :**	
State :	Nebraska	**Zip :**	68508		

Expenditures

IT Project Costs	Total	Prior Exp	FY20 Appr/Reappr	FY22 Request	FY23 Request	Future Add
Contractual Services						
Design	0	0	0	0	0	0
Programming	0	0	0	0	0	0
Project Management	0	0	0	0	0	0
Data Conversion	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal Contractual Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Telecommunications						
Data	0	0	0	0	0	0
Video	0	0	0	0	0	0
Voice	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wireless	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal Telecommunications	0	0	0	0	0	0
Training						
Technical Staff	0	0	0	0	0	0
End-user Staff	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal Training	0	0	0	0	0	0

IT Project Proposal Report - Detail
Agency: 009 - SECRETARY OF STATE
Budget Cycle: 2021-2023 Biennium   Version: AF - AGENCY FINAL REQUEST

Expenditures

IT Project Costs	Total	Prior Exp	FY20 Appr/Reappr	FY22 Request	FY23 Request	Future Add
Other Project Costs						
Personnnel Cost	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Materials	0	0	0	0	0	0
Travel	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal Other Project Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Expenditures						
Hardware	0	0	0	0	0	0
Software	425,000	0	0	350,000	15,000	60,000
Network	28,500	0	0	4,000	4,500	20,000
Other	2,000	0	0	2,000	0	0
Subtotal Capital Expenditures	455,500	0	0	356,000	19,500	80,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	455,500	0	0	356,000	19,500	80,000

Funding

Fund Type	Total	Prior Exp	FY20 Appr/Reappr	FY22 Request	FY23 Request	Future Add
General Fund	99,500	0	0	0	19,500	80,000
Cash Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
Federal Fund	356,000	0	0	356,000	0	0
Revolving Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL FUNDING	455,500	0	0	356,000	19,500	80,000
VARIANCE	0	0	0	0	0	0

IT Project: Election Night Reporting / Candidate Module System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The proposed project is to replace our existing Election Night Reporting (ENR) and Candidate filing system (Candidate Module) utilized by the Elections Division. The replacement of this system will be done with federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds and is part of our ongoing plan to utilize these federal funds to modernize election IT infrastructure in Nebraska. Our contract for the existing ENR/Candidate Module system expires during the next biennium. Due to the need for increased system security and functionality, we are seeking to implement a new or significantly upgraded solution.

The proposed project is to replace our existing Election Night Reporting (ENR) and Candidate filing system (Candidate Module) utilized by the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office (SOS). The replacement of this system will be done with federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds and is part of our ongoing plan to utilize these federal funds to modernize election IT infrastructure in Nebraska. Our contract for the existing ENR/Candidate Module system expires during the next biennium. Due to the need for increased system security and functionality, we are seeking to implement a new or upgraded solution.

The ENR system is used to enter and post election night results for races that file with the Secretary of State by all 93 Nebraska counties on our website. The Candidate Module allows input of candidate information for these same races. Both pieces of functionality are currently provided by one vendor. Once the data is entered for a given election, the data is electronically transferred to a subsequent vendor for ballot layout, printing and programming for specific voting equipment. This system also produces the official report of the Nebraska Board of State Canvassers.

The new/upgraded solution needs to automate tasks to improve staff efficiency, improve audit logs for security, utilize two-factor authentication (2FA) for secure user access, provide the option for local-level results and update the look and feel of the public-facing results website to a modern and easy-to-navigate website. The new system will be more efficient for users at the state and county levels. It will also make it easier for the public to view results for statewide elections.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND OUTCOMES (15 PTS):

The specific goal of this project is to implement a modern, secure, and efficient IT solution for ENR and candidate filings. We are looking for a cost effective solution that meets our existing requirements and provides enhanced security and functionality. The ENR/Candidate Module system is used to enter election night results for races that file with the Secretary of State by all 93 Nebraska counties on our website. The ENR website is used by the public and news media to monitor election results on Election Day. The Candidate Module allows input of candidate information for these same results.

1. *Describe the project, including:*

   - *Specific goals and objectives;*
   - *Expected beneficiaries of the project; and*

- *Expected outcomes.*

The specific goal of this project is to implement a modern, secure, and efficient IT solution for ENR and candidate filings. We are looking for a cost effective solution that meets our existing requirements and provides enhanced security and functionality. The ENR/Candidate Module system is used to enter and post election night results for races that file with the Secretary of State by all 93 Nebraska counties on our website. The ENR website is used by the public and news media to monitor election results on Election Day. The Candidate Module allows input of candidate information for these same results.

The existing system was developed in 2010 and needs enhancements and additional security features to make the system more user friendly and mitigate against potential cyber security concerns. As the ENR website is used to post election results on Election Day it is a target for cyber-attacks. Additional security features such as 2FA are needed to mitigate against potential attacks. Specific enhancements for the new system include: a single location for candidate information to be entered into the system, the ability for counties to upload results to the ENR site by precinct, county, contest and district, publication of local election results, and the ability to generate maps down to the precinct level. The ENR site should be able to accommodate multiple languages but at a minimum it must be able to accommodate Spanish.

The expected beneficiaries for this project are the SOS, county election officials, the public, and candidates. The expected outcome is for the new solution to provide the State of Nebraska with a more streamlined and secure process for entering candidate data and posting election results.

2. *Describe the measurement and assessment methods that will verify that the project outcomes have been achieved.*

A formal proposal will specify the required and preferred system functionality. The outcome of the project will be verified by stakeholders. Extensive system testing by internal staff and stakeholders will be utilized to determine whether the system meets the agreed upon system functionality.

3. *Describe the project's relationship to your agency comprehensive information technology plan.*

This project is included in our agency's comprehensive information technology plan and replaces/upgrades an existing system that provides the ENR/Candidate Module functionality. The new system will utilize current technology that has application support and maintenance.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION / BUSINESS CASE (25 PTS):

4.   Provide the project justification in terms of tangible benefits (i.e. economic return on investment) and/or intangible benefits (e.g. additional services for customers).

The existing ENR / Candidate Module System is 10 years old and needs a full system update and enhancements for 2FA during user login, automation of tasks to improve staff efficiency, and additional website functionality.

The new system will help the SOS, county election officials, the public, and candidates. The system will have more options to automate tasks to ensure that the items get completed correctly and efficiently without requiring a staff member to perform the task. This will free up time, resources, and manpower. A new system will make the process of preparing for an election more efficient for each county election official by allowing counties to generate sample ballots, retain candidate info, and have the capability to post local election results on a new public facing website. The website will also make it easier for the public to find posted election results.

5.   Describe other solutions that were evaluated, including their strengths and weaknesses, and why they were rejected. Explain the implications of doing nothing and why this option is not acceptable.

We are aware of at least three providers, including our current provider, which have developed ENR/Candidate Module solutions for other states. We have not yet selected a provider for this system. We have started reviewing the solutions offered by these vendors to determine appropriate cost estimates and procurement options.

We're seeking a new ENR/Candidate Module system because our current system is 10 years old and our existing contract for these services expires during the next biennium. If we do nothing, our website could become vulnerable to hacking, become out of date and public trust in the electoral process would be diminished. Alternatives are posting election results PDFs on our website or distributing via CD or book format, using Excel or Access databases to track candidate filings, political subdivision contests, generate mailing data for certificates, etc. Utilizing this type of technology would be taking a step backwards and would not be tenable to the public and media who rely on our website for timely election results. In addition, it would be time consuming and inefficient for SOS staff and county election officials.

6. If the project is the result of a state or federal mandate, please specify the mandate being addressed.

This project is not the result of a state or federal mandate.

TECHNICAL IMPACT (20 PTS):

7. Describe how the project enhances, changes or replaces present technology systems, or implements a new technology system. Describe the technical elements of the project, including hardware, software, and communications requirements. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed solution.

The project will replace our current ENR and Candidate module with new technology. Our system was built over 10 years ago using Visual Basic.net, Microsoft ASP.net, SQL server, and Crystal Reports.

The system needs to have the capability to retain prior candidate's data and build off of that instead of having to do it from scratch. It should be able to save data from prior elections that can be used as a template to set up similar future elections with ease. It should be able to track prior election dates, term lengths, and next election dates for contests, so that when future elections are created, the system automatically populates the correct contests and district information based on that tracked information. The system should be able to directly email candidate filing acknowledgements, store political subdivision contact information, be able to directly email political subdivisions for anticipated contest vacancies, and be readily compatible for future enhancements such as online candidate filing and online political subdivision filing.

In addition, to the functionality previously noted, the system should have the capability to support local-level election results for counties, including for candidate filing purposes. The new system should also be able to provide enhanced security for the 2FA. It is expected that the new solution allows the ability to track and log all user activity and end remote sessions when needed. The solution should also have a modern looking ENR site and we would like it to be more user friendly so it is easier for the public to find posted election results. In the end, this solution will not only make all the parties who use the system more efficient, but it should will make it easier for the public to find election results.

The solution we choose will be hosted by the OCIO or by the vendor in their own environment. The vendor must be able to provide IT support/maintenance and have an account manager assigned to us so we can reach out directly to same person each time.

8. Address the following issues with respect to the proposed technology:

- *Describe the reliability, security and scalability (future needs for growth or adaptation) of the technology.*
- *Address conformity with applicable NITC technical standards and guidelines (available at http://nitc.ne.gov/standards/) and generally accepted industry standards.*
- *Address the compatibility with existing institutional and/or statewide infrastructure.*

The new system will comply with NITC standards and guidelines as well as adapt to the statewide infrastructure. We will require compliance with NITC standards in our contract with the chosen vendor. The software and hardware for the system must utilize updated and supported technology and services available for each product. A redundancy plan will be established and the system will be on a scheduled backup plan. The system must be fully functional with all components operating 99.9 percent of the scheduled production hours. The system will be subjected to penetration testing, intrusion testing and vulnerability scans for both internal and external systems. The results of these scans will be reviewed and a mitigation plan created if vulnerabilities or weaknesses are found.

PRELIMINARY PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION (10 PTS):

9.   Describe the preliminary plans for implementing the project. Identify project sponsor(s) and examine stakeholder acceptance. Describe the project team, including their roles, responsibilities, and experience.

Currently we are exploring potential solution providers. The solution will need to be an out-of-the-box application/solution and implemented in other states. Once we have narrowed down the search we will request a demo and reach out to the states using this same system and get their reviews.

The project sponsor will be the Secretary of State, Robert B. Evnen.

SOS Project Team Members are: Wayne Bena, Deputy SOS – Elections, Andrew Buller, Assistant Deputy for Elections, Colleen Byelick, Chief Deputy/General Counsel, Joan Arnold, Deputy for Finance, Chad Sump, Chief Information Officer, Minank Patel, IT Officer.

Solution Provider Team - TBD

10.   List the major milestones and/or deliverables and provide a timeline for completing each.

The milestones would be to include the selection of a vendor, identifying business requirements, testing the system, identify and having issues fixed, then implementing the production system. It is anticipated that a RFP will be put out approximately April of 2021 with the project beginning approximately July of 2021 and implementation of the new system by the end of 2021.

11. *Describe the training and staff development requirements.*

The vendor will provide training materials to SOS and all County Election staff. Once trained, SOS can provide supplemental virtual training to the counties.

12. *Describe the ongoing support requirements.*

Ongoing support will be noted in the contract and will define being hosted either via the vendor or OCIO to ensure hardware, redundancy, back-up, retention, and disaster recovery needs are met and conform to NITC and Secretary of State standards. The vendor will need to provide ongoing maintenance for the system, ongoing technical support for SOS staff, and upgrades as needed for any changes. SOS staff will provide ongoing technical support for counties.

RISK ASSESSMENT (10 PTS):

13. *Describe possible barriers and risks related to the project and the relative importance of each.*

Possible barriers include:

- Communication and planning during the implementation of the software.
- Any system issues, defects or errors that do not meet the Secretary of State's expectations will need to be addressed as minor or substantial fixes.
- Vendor resources don't meet expectations. The timeline for the project is dependent on key vendor staff devoting sufficient time and resources to the project.
- Vendor could misunderstand requirements or deliver components not requested. Must ensure the vendor fully understands processes and requirements so time can be allocated appropriately.
- Additional and unforeseen expenses could push the project over budget.
- Changes in internal or vendor staff could slow or delay the project as new staff will need to be trained and brought up to date.

14. Identify strategies which have been developed to minimize risks.

Risks will be minimized by presenting well-defined criteria, expectations, timelines, and deliverables to the chosen solution provider. Staff will be involved in the development, testing, and implementation to ensure that expectations are met and issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner. The chosen project will adhere to NITC Technology standards and best practices. Selection will be made by identifying the best vendor equipped to meet project outcomes and goals as evidenced by prior experience, proven project successes, and references provided by prior customers.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS AND BUDGET (20 PTS):

15. Financial Information. The "Financial" information tab in the Nebraska Budget Request and Reporting System (NBRRS) is used to enter the financial information for this project (NOTE: For each IT Project Proposal created in the NBRRS, the submitting agency must prepare an "IT Issue" in the NBRRS to request funding for the project.)

The initial project costs will be funded through Federal Funds. The most comprehensive vendor quote provided was an estimate ranging from $250,000 to $350,000 depending on specifics. Our request is based upon the high end of this vendor estimate including additional costs for server migration and ongoing OCIO hosting fees. The vendor estimate also included $15,000 for annual hosting/maintenance. These ongoing costs would be funded by existing General Fund appropriations already included in our base budget.