

Nebraska State  
Records Board  
440 So. 8<sup>th</sup>, Suite 210  
Lincoln, NE 68508

John Gale  
Chairman  
(402) 471-2745



## APPLICATION FOR STATE RECORDS BOARD GRANT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION (State Agency Grant Application)

State Agencies desiring grants from 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.

*Instructions:* Click using your mouse pointer in the left most area of each text entry field to begin typing your answers. After clicking in your first text entry area you may then use the [Tab] button to advance from field to field or [Shift] + [Tab] to move back to the previous text area.

### I. GRANT SUMMARY

1. Name of agency applying for grant: Nebraska State Historical Society
2. Title of project: Digital Archives and Records Center Implementation Study
3. Grant request amount: \$25,000
4. Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project? (Yes or No) Not at this time

If yes, please provide any statutory reference or authorization for the fee:

5. Provide a brief description of the project for which the grant is being requested:

A Digital Archives Feasibility Study for Nebraska was completed in November 2007. The study concluded that the time was critical for the creation of a Digital Archives for the state, given the consensus of key stakeholders that such a facility is essential to ensure the preservation of electronic records of long-term or permanent value. The Implementation Study being proposed will define in specific terms the budget needed to create a Nebraska Digital Archives and Records Center, particularly all associated staffing, equipment, and storage costs. While the first study determined that a Digital Archives is needed and who the partners in creating it should be, this proposed study will provide the details needed to proceed in creating the facility.

### II. GRANT DETAIL

1. Please describe the project in detail:

During a six-month study in 2007, Adam Jansen, Assistant State Archivist and Electronic Records Specialist for the State of Washington, evaluated the feasibility of creating a Digital Archives in the State of Nebraska. Jansen concluded that the time was right for such a facility to be created as state agencies and local governments are (rightly) concerned about the long-term viability of the electronic records that they are creating today. In Nebraska, the majority of public records are created in electronic form and nearly twenty times more records are produced electronically than on paper. The longer the state waits to create a mechanism to retain permanently those

records of enduring value, the more our history is being lost and the less accountability that government provides to its citizens.

The State Archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Office of the Secretary of State's Records Management Division are the entities in state government with the statutory responsibility to ensure the long-term preservation of state records that have historical, administrative, legal, or fiscal value, regardless of the type of media on which the records were created. Those agencies are partners in this endeavor to create a Nebraska Digital Archives and Records Center that will preserve valuable electronic records while allowing citizens to access the records of their government, twenty-four hours a day.

While the Feasibility Study looked at whether or not such a facility was viable, the proposed Implementation Study will examine specific costs and needs associated with creating a Digital Archives. This study will determine solid budget figures for start-up and continued operations; who and what entities (state agencies and local government participants) would be involved; how the system would work in terms of configuration, workflow, and operations; staffing needs for the facility and job descriptions; and will recommend the physical location for the facility and delineate the special needs that this location must meet. In summary, this study will provide the blueprint for creating the Nebraska Digital Archives and Records Center.

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

The beneficiary and/or recipient of this service will be state, county, and municipal government agencies in Nebraska and Nebraska's citizens. The first group will benefit by being able to preserve their electronic records for as long as necessary. Citizens will benefit by being assured access to government records twenty-four hours a day from their home computers.

**3. Please provide a timeline for implementation. NOTE: a specific completion date must be provided as grant funds lapse if not expended prior to completion date. (provide answer below)**

Projected start date will be July 1, 2008; completion date will be December 2008.

**4. What will the agencies contribution to the project be? Provide examples such as labor, equipment etc. (provide answer below)**

The Nebraska State Historical Society and the Secretary of State's Records Management Division will contribute labor and records content expertise. The Office of the CIO will contribute technical expertise.

**5. Has this project ever been submitted as a budget request? (Yes or No) No.**

**Please explain:** The end result of this project is likely to lead to a budget request for start-up and operations of a Digital Archives and Records Center for the State of Nebraska.

**6. Does the project require additional statutory authority? (Yes or No) No.**

**Please explain:** It is anticipated, however, that the creation of such a repository would need to be enacted in state law.

**7. Why is the grant money needed for the project, and, if applicable, how will the service be sustained once the grant money is expended? (provide answer below)**

The costs for creating a digital archives need to be determined and stated explicitly so that funding from the Legislature can be pursued. This study will detail all costs associated with start-up of the Nebraska Digital Archives and Records Center.

**8. Please describe how this project will enhance the delivery of the state agency services or access to those services. (provide answer below)**

Upon start-up of the repository, government agencies will be able to transfer electronic records of permanent or long-term value to the Digital Archives, providing a cost-effective means to retain and maintain, through migration processes, the readability and accessibility of the historical records of Nebraska governmental agencies. Citizens will be able to access the records of their government from the comfort of their homes, twenty-four hours a day.

**9. Please describe how this project will: (NOTE: you may respond to any or all of these criteria)**

**a. Improve the efficiency of agency operations:**

**b. Facilitate collaboration among state agencies:**

**c. Facilitate collaboration between state agencies and other public institutions:**

**d. Support public / private partnerships in the delivery of public services:**

This project provides solutions for implementing a Nebraska Digital Archives and Records Center. That facility will:

- \*Create one central repository for electronic records, thereby solving the issue of durable media.
- \*Lead to lower costs for government agencies as expensive filming or transfers and storage for electronic records copied to paper are eliminated.
- \*Eliminate the need for state agencies and counties to invest in back-up servers or worry about storing archival data, further reducing cost.
- \*Provide back-up and security of essential legal and historical data for continuation of government operations.
- \*Ensure seamless e-workflow processes, recognizing that client agencies are not archivists.
- \*Provide easily searchable, accessible, viewable, and printable data.
- \*Ensure legal compliance for retention of electronic records.
- \*Assist geographically dispersed agencies to better serve their customers.
- \*Be a final repository for all permanent electronic records.
- \*Assure that all necessary records management/archival functions for the records are met as both the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Secretary of State's Records Management Division oversee records requirements.

### III. TECHNICAL DETAIL

**1. Describe the hardware, software and communications needed for this project and explain why these choices were made:** (provide answer below)

All equipment needs for the digital archives will be addressed in the completed implementation study. The consultant will determine start-up costs for both hardware and software needs, as well as anticipated costs for the system's expansion over time.

**2. Address any technical issues with the proposed technology including each of the following:**

**a. Conformity with generally accepted industry standards. NOTE: Projects which interface with other state systems (such as distance learning systems) should also address NITC technical standards and guidelines.**

The system will be developed in accordance with generally accepted industry standards, while also addressing current state systems and NITC standards and guidelines. The system will be compatible with the current system and be flexible enough to allow for growth.

**b. Compatibility with existing institutional and / or statewide infrastructure:**

**c. Reliability, security and scalability. Include future needs for growth or adaptation:**

**3. Describe how technical support will be provided:** (provide answer below)

The Implementation Study will provide specifics on technical support requirements, including staffing that will be necessary to manage the system

### IV. CONTACT INFORMATION, SIGNATURE

**Contact person for any questions regarding this application:** Andrea Faling

**Contact phone number:** 471-4785

Contact email address: bun@nebraskahistory.org

*Signed*  
Signed this 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2008

  
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Agency Director Signature

**Please Return to:**

**Nebraska State Records Board  
440 So. 8<sup>th</sup>, Suite 210  
Lincoln, NE 68508**

## Cost Sheet

Consulting fees are \$165/hour straight time, plus travel expenses. Not to exceed \$25,000.

Estimated Costs:

\*Travel - \$4000

\*Labor - \$19,800 (5 weeks at 40 hours/week)

The costs will cover the following services:

\*Two-week on site visit to meet with partners identified in feasibility study, with State Personnel, and to survey locations for Digital Archives facility. Implementation plan to be approximately 20 pages with sufficient detail to enable start-up of facility.

# State of Nebraska

## Feasibility Study



**Digital Archives Feasibility  
Study for Nebraska  
Government**

**Nebraska State  
Historical Society**

A society whose records are closed cannot be open.  
A people who cannot document their rights cannot exercise them.  
A nation without access to its history cannot analyze itself.  
And a government whose records are lost cannot accountably govern.

John W. Carlin, Former Archivist of the United States

### **Executive Summary:**

The Nebraska State Historical Society became a state institution in 1883 and has been tasked with the preservation of the records of the state since 1885. Over the past 130 years the Society has accumulated in excess of 15,000 square feet of holdings and serves an average of 700 customer requests for state records and information on a monthly basis. The archival storage facility has the capacity for 28,000 linear feet of state government records, and is currently storing approximately 30,000 linear feet. The Nebraska State Historical Society has a clear legal mandate to acquire and preserve the records of the State of Nebraska, regardless of media type. As agencies do not have the knowledge or capability to preserve electronic records, it falls upon the Historical Society to provide leadership in this field. This leadership role will require the Historical Society to provide trained and knowledgeable staff, a transfer method for agencies to send their records to the Historical Society and an archival repository for the preservation of electronic records of long term or permanent value.

This feasibility study assesses the agency's readiness and capacity to create a digital repository to preserve and provide access to electronic records of long term or permanent legal, historical or fiscal value. With a dramatic increase over the last decade in the amount of information that is being produced within state government, the state faces a significant challenge in preserving these electronic records due to the diverse nature and large volumes of records that are already in existence; complicated by the lack of appropriate tools and experience in electronic records management. The repository will function as an electronic 'warehouse' for any government record required to be kept for greater than ten years, while providing an efficient and cost effective lifecycle workflow for these records. The benefits of this initiative to the public will revolutionize the way citizens access the records of their government. By making public records accessible through a web interface and powerful, easy to use search tools, citizens of the state will be able to access these records from anywhere, at anytime; while reducing the number of routine public disclosure requests received by state agencies. In order for the digital repository initiative to be successful, there are several key elements that must exist: strong executive management support, legislative

mandate to drive the process, powerful stakeholder groups that will support the initiative, sufficient funding and a skilled, knowledgeable staff.

It is clear that the required strong executive management support exists. Both Michael J. Smith, Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society, and Secretary of State John Gale understand the critical need for a way to manage, store and preserve the important electronic records of state government. As the heads of the two legislatively empowered agencies with oversight into records management, the support of these agency directors is critical to the success of the initiative. Law 84 – 1203 states the Secretary of State is "designated as the State Records Administrator" and is given the authority to "establish and administer...a records management program which will apply efficient and economical methods to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposal of state and local records"; while Law 84-1214.01 authorizes the State Archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society to "acquire...any document, record, or material which has been ...determined to be of archival or historical significance." The State Records Board, established by the legislature to "advise and assist the [State Records] Administrator in his duties" [Law 84-1204] also understands the state's need and authorized the execution of this feasibility study.

The legislation for the requirement to actively manage records is plainly stated in the Records Management Act, Chapter 84 of the Revised Statutes of the State of Nebraska. The legislature states its intention in this chapter with regards to electronic public records and the need for the management and oversight of electric records. Within 84-1201, the legislature declares that there is "a growing demand for electronic access to public records, and agencies should use new technology to enhance public access to public records" and 84-1207 requires agency heads to comply with the records management requirements established by the State Records Administrator . While these requirements have been in existence for years, the tools to comply with these laws have not been available and as a result, very few, if any, electronic records are being actively managed and preserved for the good of the public. A digital repository in the care of a trusted, trained, disinterested third party will allow for the intellectual and cultural digital assets of the state to be preserved and made accessible for generations to come.

After extensive interviews with major stakeholders from a cross section of important state and local agencies, it was unanimous among the group that the need for, and interest in, a digital repository is strong within the state. The core stakeholder groups interviewed for this feasibility study represent some of the largest and most important record producing agencies in the state: Nebraska Association of County Officials, Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court, Nebraska State Court, Office of the CIO, Nebraska Library Commission and the University of Nebraska Archives. All of the stakeholder

groups interviewed for this feasibility study expressed initial support for the initiative and agreed that the Historical Society is the agency best positioned with both the legal authority and the knowledge base to operate the repository. From a partnership perspective and a needs basis, the timing for the initiative is right. The need for a digital repository is approaching critical mass; with more permanent, archival electronic records being lost every month.

The challenges that the digital repository initiative will need to overcome include a lack of trained, knowledgeable staff with expertise in digital preservation and an insufficient budget to create the necessary infrastructure. The Historical Society and the Office of the Secretary of State have a strong agency knowledge of records management and archival science, but have limited staff knowledge or experience with electronic records management and preservation. Neither the Historical Society nor the Office of the Secretary of State has the staff resources, the appropriate skill sets, or a sufficient budget to start up a project of this magnitude. Without additional staff and funds, this initiative has a high chance of failure. According to the National Association of State CIOs, greater than 95% of all records produced today are created in an electronic format – nearly 20 times more records are produced electronically than on paper. To address this explosion of information creation, the options are: to continue to do 'business as usual' and run a high risk of losing the electronic records forever; print the electronic records out onto paper, knowing that the current paper repositories are already over capacity; or fund a digital repository that will preserve the electronic records while allowing citizens to access the records of their government from the comforts of their home, twenty-four hours a day.

As the Historical Society and the Office of the Secretary of State are the two agencies that are empowered by the legislature to oversee the management of records within state government, both agencies must be given the tools and the staffing required to execute on their respective core missions while ensuring that these records will be accessible to the citizens of the state. With the Office of the CIO rolling out a statewide email system and showing interest in working with the State Archives and the Secretary of State on the retention and preservation issues, the timing for this initiative is ideal. Assuming that funding and staffing can be obtained for the initiative, a digital repository is a very attainable goal filling a critical need within the state – preserving electronic public records of enduring value for generations to come.