

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

OF GAGE COUNTY

BEATRICE, NEBRASKA



Matt Bauman Rex Adams Ron Fleecs Gary Barnard
 Dennis Byars David Anderson Shirley Gronewold

April 8, 2009

Mr. John Gale
Nebraska Secretary of State
C/o Ms. Cathy Danahy, Executive Director
Nebraska State Records Board
440 South 8th Street, Suite 210
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508-2294

Dear Mr. Gale,

Please find enclosed the Application of Gage County, Nebraska, for a Grant from the Nebraska State Records Board to improve access to public information. It has been the desire of many Gage County officials for some time to increase the transparency of county government and the ease of access to government services for our citizens. We view increasing electronic access to information for residents of Gage County and those who interact with Gage County as a critical component of that effort in the 21st century.

The Project will focus on significant expansion of available information and resources with the capability for timely updates conveniently available to individual designated staffers. It will also include a substantial focus on accessibility functions and information for disabled persons to maximize their access potential wherever possible, including information about how citizens can improve access for disabled individuals from their personal computer system.

We appreciate your consideration of our Application. Please do not hesitate to contact us if anything further is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David T. Anderson, Vice Chr. for.".

Rex Adams, Chairman, Gage County Board of Supervisors

RA/dab Attachment

APPLICATION FOR STATE RECORDS BOARD GRANT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

Application for Local Government Grant

I. Grant Summary

1. Name of government agencies/entities applying for grant:

A. Gage County, Nebraska – Gage County Board of Supervisors

B. Other jurisdictions and departments collaborating and partnering in the project:

1. Office of Gage County Highway Superintendent
2. Office of Gage County Planning and Zoning Administrator
3. Office of Gage County Flood Plain Administrator
4. Office of Gage County Surveyor
5. Office of Gage County Sheriff
6. Office of Gage County Detention Center
7. Office of Gage County Weed Superintendent
8. Office of Gage County Director of Administrative Services
9. Office of Gage County Treasurer's Office
10. Office of Gage County Judge Steven Timm
11. Office of Gage County Court Clerk/Magistrate

C. Other jurisdictions and departments invited to collaborate and partner in the project:

1. Office of Gage County Assessor
2. Office of Gage County Registrar of Deeds
3. Office of Gage County Registrar of Deeds Office
4. Office of Gage County Clerk
5. Office of Gage County Election Commission
6. Office of Gage County Emergency Management
7. Office of Gage County Courthouse Maintenance
8. Office of Gage County Physician Medical Director
9. Office of Gage County Veterans Services
10. Office of Gage County General Assistance Services
11. Office of Clerk of the District Court of Gage County
12. Office of Gage County District Court Judge Paul Korslund

D. Other entities which may be invited to collaborate and partner in the project at different levels include:

1. All 16 Gage County Municipalities: Adams, Barneston, Beatrice, Blue Springs, Clatonia, Cortland, Ellis, Filley, Holmesville, Lanham, Liberty, Odell, Pickrell, Rockford, Wymore, Virginia.
2. All 24 Gage County Townships: Adams, Barneston, Blakely, Blue Springs-Wymore Consolidated, Clatonia, Elm, Filley, Glenwood, Grant, Hanover, Highland, Holt, Hooker, Island Grove, Liberty Lincoln, Logan, Midland, Nemaha, Paddock, Riverside, Rockford, Sherman, Sicily,
3. Entities with Tax Levy Authority in Gage County
4. Recipients of funding from Gage County
5. Entities/agencies which provide services to Gage County residents
6. Entities outside Gage County with Interjurisdictional Agreements/Arrangements for Services within Gage County
7. Parties to Interlocal Agreements or Contracts with Gage County
8. Links to other local, regional, state, and federal sites which may be useful to Gage County residents including:
 - A. Nebraska.gov and other state government sites
 - B. State entities and organizations
 - C. Federal government sites
 - D. Other national entities and organizations
 - E. Regional entities and organizations
 - F. Sites for neighboring Nebraska jurisdictions
 - G. Sites for neighboring Kansas jurisdictions
 - H. Gage County entities and organizations
 - I. Other useful sites identified by Gage County officials
 - J. Other useful sites identified by Gage County citizens
9. Gage County Board Committees & Sub-Committees
10. Gage County Citizen Advisory Committees

2. Title of Project: **Gage County Online - Enhanced (Phase 1)**

A. Sub-title of Project: **Gage County Online Citizen Resource Center**

3. Brief Description of Project:

A. This multi-jurisdictional Project will expand and enhance the official website of Gage County, significantly increasing the amount and types of information and other resources which can be made electronically available to county residents and other users.

4. Grant Request Amount: \$25,000.00

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

II. Grant Detail

1. Please describe the project in detail:

A. This Project is Phase I of a comprehensive effort to increase the depth and breadth of content available to Gage County residents, businesses and other areas in a primarily rural county on a 24/7 basis without the need to travel to the courthouse or other locations to obtain the information. Many current requests for information currently are by phone, by e-mail, by FAX and by personal visit to individual government offices. The current county website provides limited information and is inconveniently difficult and time-consuming to update. The Goal is to create a "One-Stop" resource for Gage County which will contain or link to useful information for the user.

The Project will encourage regular updating of information by incorporating a system of easy access for any individual jurisdiction or department to simplify the process significantly from the current manner in which the site can be edited. It will include accessibility functions and information for disabled persons to maximize their access potential wherever possible, including information about how an individual can improve access for disabled persons from their personal computer system. At a minimum, the new enhanced site will include complete contact information for every county official, a complete calendar of county meetings and events, and a user-friendly comprehensive directory of all information which can be accessed on the site or through the links on the site.

C. Although there has been informal discussion of expanded needs and study of the sites of other entities for year, the Project will begin with a multi-step Needs Assessment.

Step 1: Internal Needs Assessment by officials and staff, who will be encouraged to “think outside the box” and “dream” about both short-term and long-term possibilities.

Step 2: User Needs Assessment by the public, facilitated by officials and staff.

Step 3: Priority Needs Assessment where those needs identified will be prioritized by feasibility, time, cost and other factors.

Step 4: Consultation Needs Assessment with a web designer to evaluate the Needs Assessment.

D. Programming Applications

E. Site Design & Mapping

F. Training & Implementation

G. Data Entry

H. Evaluation

I. Planning for Future Phases.

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

A. The citizens of Gage County will be the primary beneficiaries of this expanded service in that much more information will be available much easier from their own location. Businesses, other government entities and those seeking information about Gage County will benefit from this service. Gage County officials and staff will benefit from this service because it will allow them to provide a higher level of service to more individuals without any increasing in staffing requirements or cost.

3. Timeline for implementation

A. The expected completion date for *Gage County Online - Enhanced (Phase 1)* is no later than May 15, 2010. This includes completion of a 5 Year Plan for future phases.

4. Subdivision(s) contribution to project (labor, equipment, etc.)

A. The Gage County Board, as well as all budgeted county departments and all elected county officials, have made an ongoing commitment for a number of

years by continuing to invest in purchasing, maintaining computer equipment and peripherals as well as software packages specific to the function of each office or department. This project is not expected to require any new equipment. All collaborators and partners will contribute staff time to participate in Needs Assessment, Design Consultation as needed, Training of Staff, Data Entry and Implementation when completed, a Public Information campaign to educate users when ready, monitoring of citizen feedback for Project Evaluation purposes and Advance Planning for future phases of development.

5. Is other funding available for this project (explain)?

A. No. No other funding is available for this project. Budget cuts and financial constraints do not allow for funding of this project. No tax fund allocations are expected to be available in the foreseeable future. No other donations or grant funding sources have been obtained for this project.

6. Does the project require additional statutory authority (explain)?

A. No. The Project does not require any additional statutory authority.

7. Specify (in detail) what the grant money will be used for. Include a complete cost breakdown of the project. Please attach bids from vendors (if applicable).

A. Because the first stage of the Project is a Needs Assessment, it is not possible yet to solicit any bids from vendors because specifications are not complete. The primary expense will be for the services of the web site designer who will direct or assist in every aspect of the Project, including Needs Assessment, Programming Applications, Training & Implementation, and Planning for Future Phases. Some expense will be incurred to purchase certain software programs or licenses as determined by the Needs Assessment. Some expense will be incurred in a public information campaign after implementation to inform users of the new resource and how to use it.

8. Why is the grant money needed for the project, and if applicable, how will the service be sustained once the grant money is expended?

A. Due to increasing budget constraints, projects which are not mandated by law are necessarily the last to be considered for funding. If grant funds are not received, the project will be delayed for at least several years and perhaps indefinitely. While the need is there and continues to increase, the reality is that this is not a project which is likely to ever be a high priority for the allocation of tax dollars.

B. A significant emphasis of the project is to identify the specific needs of each jurisdiction and each entity. Factors included the nature and volume of data to be

made internet accessible and the frequency of the need to update such information. The design will allow each jurisdiction and entity the option for “back entry system access” to edit and update data as often as is needed with a system that is much easier for staff to use than the one currently in place. Needs identification, design consultation and training will allow officials and staffers to manage their data and links much more efficiently while providing update information to the public much more quickly. The public’s increased use of these services is expected to significantly decrease staff time now needed to assist citizens in accessing this information, thus allowing staff to provide a higher level of service to those who have needs beyond the electronic access without a corresponding need to increase staffing and expenditures

C. The service will be maintained by each jurisdiction using it within their normal budgets. It is expected that the primary expense will be adding training on the service to training provided for new staff. The savings in staff time realized by minimizing staff time now used to provide public information via phone, office visits, etc. is expected to more than compensate for any additional time or expense in training staff and maintaining any service updates.

9. Please describe how this project will enhance the delivery of government services or access to those services.

A. Users of this service will have significantly more information available on a user-friendly website which will make accessing specific areas of information much easier and result in them being able to use electronic research more often to seek information and answer questions. Not only will users find an easily navigable website leading them quickly in their direction they need to follow, there will be easily identifiable resources and links to a number of related sites and sites deemed useful for Gage County citizens. No attempt will be made to “reinvent the wheel”. A community partner with a viable website will be invited to link to the service to the benefit of the Gage County users and their users. An example might be the recently updated and improved website of the Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce – Gage County Tourism. Users of this service would find an easily identifiable link to that site which contains information useful to citizens, visitors, prospective residents and workers, prospective business investors and others. In return, the Chamber’s link on their website to this project allows them to offer far more expanded various aspects of Gage County and Gage County government

10. Please describe how this project will improve the efficiency of government operations.

A. Many of the functions of county government met are information related. Citizens need to provide information to government and government needs to provide information to citizens. This means much staff time is invested in serving

customers at the counter, serving customers over the phone, serving customers by FAX, serving customers by U.S. mail, etc.

B. One aspect of the Project would consist of a Content Management System (CMS) which will allow designated and authorized administration staff from any office or department to dynamically add and update the website through a secure back-end administration system via username & password. This back-end administration system allows for webpage creation and updates, image uploads, file uploads, and site organization structure control using a CMS which is considerably easier and faster to operate than the current system allows.

C. The Project will allow each office and department to identify for themselves the types of information most requested and needed by the public, by businesses, by media and by other users, while evaluating the feasibility and scope of making that information available electronically. With training on how to use the convenient back end entry system to update information as often as needed, this process will also be much less time-consuming. Saving staff time for those tasks which cannot be accomplished on the Internet allows for more efficient operation and the ability to enhance services in ways not possible under current budget constraints.

D. Other sites used to evaluate format and content will include Nebraska.org, the University of Nebraska, Lincoln – Lancaster County "Interlink", and the City of Beatrice

11. Please describe how this project will facilitate collaboration among other local, state and federal agencies and other public institutions.

A. Information exchanged between local, regional, state and federal agencies and other public institutions will be significantly enhanced, more convenient, timelier and more accessible. This enhanced level of understanding and knowledge about other offices will encourage more use of these agencies and more communication between agencies.

12. Please describe how this project will support public/private partnerships in the delivery of public services through the Official State portal, Nebraska.gov.

A. Consumer information is a significant key to the enhancement and support of public/private partnerships. Information of greater scope and depth will be more readily available to all users knowing what is available and how to access the information is an important step in encouraging the exploration of all State services, including the consideration of public/private partnerships.

13. Does the project involve the licensing, permitting or regulation of business? If yes, explain how the project or service will allow integration with the State of Nebraska's Business Portal and the One-Stop Online Business registration system.

A. At this time, it is not anticipated that the Project will involve the licensing, permitting or regulation of business. It is possible that this might be considered for future phases of the Project. If so, integration within the State of Nebraska's Business Portal and the One-Stop Online Business registration system will be an integral component of any future design.

III. Technical Information

1. Describe the hardware, software and communications needed for this project and explain why these choices were made.

A. Project Technology includes: Existing Software as a Service (SaaS) Web Platform/Web Development; XHTML; CSS; Javascript; AJAX; RSS; Graphic Design/Java Enterprise Edition Programming; JSP; Servlets/PostgreSQL Database/Apache Web Server/Apache Tomcat Application Server/CentOS Server Operating System/Top Tier Data Center server location with multi-level secure environment and engineer's onsite 24/7.

B. This Project will consist of various Internet web software applications which already conform to the specific requirements of the Gage County Courthouse and other County offices. Some of these web applications are part of a pre-existing web platform while others are to be built as modules which can then be used to plug in to the main web platform. The Project will include Needs Assessment, Site Design and Mapping, Customer Support, Training, JAVA/JEE Programming, Graphic Design, Web Development, Web Hosting, Search Engine Optimization, Evaluation and Future Phase Advance Planning.

C. Some of the benefits of developing the Project on top of the existing web service platform as modules will allow for other similar entities (other Nebraska counties, other Nebraska cities, other organizations, etc.) to acquire the same web application functionality for a considerably less initial and overall cost. Developing these custom web service application modules allows for synergy between current users on the same platform which includes the Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce – Gage County Tourism, Main Street Beatrice, several Gage County businesses. It also simplifies the addition of future prospective users of the platform. This model essentially creates a Co-Op between all clients using this type of web service platform in order to gain access to new web functionality and make improvements on existing web applications further without additional cost. In the future, new or improved applications would be available at times for no cost or minimal cost possible.

D. The Project will evaluate the use of an emerging format called RSS (Really Simple Syndication) for distributing Current News Items per department. This technology would allow the distribution of current news information to any website that can process this standard Open Source format. For example, a website visitor could "subscribe" to the current news or events of any department using a free Google, Yahoo, or MSN account and create their own Gage County Courthouse News homepage where they would be updated on all the latest department news headers from one location and be able to click on the links to read more information on the Gage County website. An example of a Business to Business (B2B) use case for this type of application would be the Beatrice Daily Sun or any news outlet posting the latest news from a specific Gage County Department on their website. This information would be in real time and all done programmatically without the need for an employee to make updates on their side or rewriting any content. This is the information "Pulling" concept and similar to how most major news outlets CNN, FOX, etc. gather and re-publish news articles from such organizations as the Associated Press (AP). For example please see the AP article redistribution on the <http://www.beatricedailysun.com> website and view the "Nebraska" or "National" news sections under the main "News" categories.

2. Address any technical issues with the proposed technology including:

A. Conformity with general accepted industry standards. Projects which interface with other state systems (such as distance learning systems) must meet NITC technical standards and guidelines (NITC standards and guidelines are located at : <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/standards/>).

1. The Project will conform to all generally accepted industry standards. The project will meet all NITC technical standards and guidelines.

B. Compatibility with existing institutional and/or statewide infrastructure.

1. The Project will be entirely compatible with all existing intuitional infrastructure and statewide infrastructure.

C. Reliability, security and scalability (future needs for growth or adaptation).

1. The project will consist of various internet web software applications which conform to the specific requirements of the Gage County Courthouse. Some of these web applications are part of a pre-existing web platform and some are to be built as modules that can be used to plug in to the main web platform. The project will include Customer Support, Training, Java/JEE Programming, Graphic Design, Web Development, Web Hosting, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

2. The technology to be used for this software development is Java Enterprise Edition which is fully scalable to meet any amount of growth and/or future functionality requirements necessary. This is the same high performance enterprise level technology used by such businesses as Ebay.com, Amazon.com, Travelocity.com, Google.com, Cars.com, and various other large multinational corporate entities. The expectation is that all applications to be developed will run on a high performance network in a Top Tier Data Center server location with multi-level secure environment, server backups performed daily, and engineer's onsite 24/7.

3. Describe how the project will comply with the State's Technology Access Clause: <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/standards/index.html> under 2. Accessibility Architecture.

A. Where applicable, the design of all internet-based web data and links will include access points for disabled individuals in compliance with NITC standards. Since the site is designed to be used from any home or office terminal, the site will also contain detailed information and instructions regarding the adaptability of any software, hardware or other equipment the disabled person may own or purchase in the future. Implementation training for staff will also include detailed information on how to provide this information to any disabled person in other contexts (telephone, etc.)

4. Describe how technical support will be provided.

A. By definition, the Project is designed to minimize the need for additional technical support. The back end access afforded to each jurisdiction on the website and the training provided to use this access will allow designated office staff to edit and update content, add or delete links, and expand features very easily.

B. As a member of the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO), Gage County has an ongoing relationship with Nebraska Multi-County Information and Programming Services, Inc. (MIPS) computer services for technical support. It is not expected that the Project will significantly impact the need for that support, but it is available to the County should the need arise.

IV. Contact Information & Official's Signature

Contact person for any questions regarding this application:

Grant Application Project Administrator

David A. Battiato

Director of Administrative Services

Gage County, Nebraska

Gage County Courthouse

612 Grant Street, Room 18

Beatrice, Nebraska 68310

Office 402-223-1730

FAX 402-223-1371

Mobile 402-429-4750

DaveBGageCounty@aol.com

Technical Questions: Volunteer Grant Application Technical Consultant:

Jeremy Vontz

Internet Web Design Consultant

402-817-1784

Official's Signature:

Rex Adams

Chairperson, Gage County Board of Supervisors

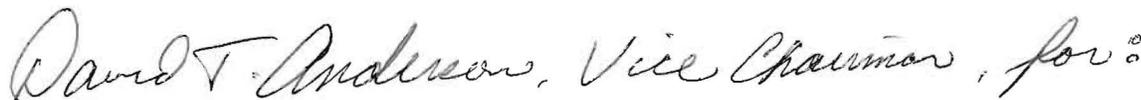
Gage County, Nebraska

Gage County Courthouse

612 Grant Street

Beatrice, Nebraska 68310

Signed this 8th day of April, 2009



Rex Adams, Chairperson, Board of Supervisors, Gage County, Nebraska

Signed this 8th day of April, 2009



David A. Battiato, Director of Administrative Services, Gage County, Nebraska