

Nebraska State  
Records Board  
440 S 8<sup>th</sup> St Ste 210  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 471-2745

John A. Gale  
Chairman



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

The Nebraska State Records Board is sponsoring a grant program for state agencies for the development of programs and technology to improve electronic access to state government information and services. Grants will be awarded for one time funding of small projects (not to exceed \$25,000). The grants may be used for the creation or enhancement of electronic access and delivery of government services and information, but not to fund ongoing operations. State agencies wishing to apply for these grants may want to first contact Nebraska.gov to establish feasibility and scope of the project.

### Grant Criteria

*Projects requesting funding must meet criteria #1-3. In addition, criteria #4-6 will be considered when reviewing funding requests:*

1. Enhance the delivery of state government agency services and improve access to those services.
2. Meet the state's technology access clause for providing equal access to services for persons with disabilities. A copy of the technology access clause is available at: <http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/standards/index.html> under 2. Accessibility Architecture.
3. If the project or service created or improved pursuant to the grant application involves the licensing, permitting or regulation of businesses, then the project or service must allow integration with the State of Nebraska's Business Portal at: <http://www.nebraska.gov/index.phtml?section=business> and the One-Stop Online Business Registration System at: <https://www.nebraska.gov/osbr/cgi/domestic.cgi?OSBRAApplication/init/init/None>
4. Improve the efficiency of state agency operations.
5. Facilitate collaboration between local, state and federal agencies and other public institutions (if applicable).
6. Support public/private partnerships in the delivery of public services through the Official State portal, Nebraska.gov.

Grant applications will be considered by the Board at their quarterly meetings. For application due dates, Board meeting dates and any other questions about the process, please contact Cathy Danahy, Executive Director, at [cathy.danahy@sos.ne.gov](mailto:cathy.danahy@sos.ne.gov) or (402) 471-2745.

State agencies desiring grants from the Nebraska State Records Board for projects to create or improve electronic access to government information must complete the following application and follow any procedures outlined.

**NOTE: All successful candidates will be required to submit a written project report to the State Records Board at the conclusion of their project.**

If you need additional space for your answers please attach any documentation necessary. *Applications not completed in full will be returned to the requesting agency for completion and resubmission.*

## **I. GRANT SUMMARY**

1. Name of agency applying for grant Shane Osborn, Treasurer State of Nebraska
2. Title of project NebraskaSpending.com
3. Brief description of project:

This project can be considered the next update or, Third Phase, of the NebraskaSpending.com website. The goal is to: build a custom design interface; reinforce the infrastructure and content; provide interface and navigation updates; improve agency level expenditure reporting; update the 2007 expenditures to reflect 2008 numbers; doubling the amount of information in the current Historical Data section; adding a County Budget section; adding a School System Budget section; and adding a University of Nebraska section.

4. Grant request amount \$ 20,000
5. Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project? If yes, provide any statutory reference or authorization for fee.

No fee for accessing records. This site will be free to the public.

## **II. GRANT DETAIL**

1. Please describe the project in detail (you may attach this description).

This project can be considered the next update or, Third Phase, of the NebraskaSpending.com website. The goal is to: build a custom design interface; reinforce the infrastructure and content; provide interface and navigation updates; improve agency level expenditure reporting; update the 2007 expenditures to reflect 2008 numbers; doubling the amount of information in the current Historical Data section; adding a

County Budget section; adding a School System Budget section; and adding a University of Nebraska section.

This update will continue with the mission of NebraskaSpending.com by providing Nebraska residents with timely and thorough state spending information. This update will improve the overall usefulness of the website by providing additional areas of spending information that will attract and retain new users.

Since going live on January 9, 2009, NebraskaSpending.com has not only provided a valuable public service to Nebraska residents, but has garnered critical acclaim from journalists, editorial boards and public advocacy groups as being one of the most comprehensive state spending and transparency websites in the United States.

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

Beneficiaries of NebraskaSpending.com include: state, federal, and municipal elected officials and members of their staff; students; teachers; general public; and any other demographic concerned with state spending habits and practices. Activity for the website has been steady. So far we've had 308,237 hits and average 20 to 40 visitors each day. We expect those numbers to double with the introduction of the University and other local governments financial numbers.

**3. Timeline for implementation (a specific completion date (MM/YYYY) must be provided). Grant funds lapse if not expended prior to completion date.**

Site will be finished by June, 2009.

**4. State agency contribution to project (labor, equipment etc.).**

In addition to providing general web maintenance and timely updates of spending figures, the Treasurer's office will: provide conceptual ideas for the visual elements of the site; provide images for the conceptual design if necessary; provide Database Extracts from the NIS system to be used with the site database; provide direction on what and how users search the database information; provide assistance with the final testing prior to site launch; attend GRAVEL instruction on updating site information.

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

Treasurer's office will be sharing the cost for some of the project, but needs the grant to fulfill the bulk of the expenses.

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

Currently, the Treasurer is required to keep a true just accounting of all state funds; this project fits with that mission.

**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).**

Since NebraskaSpending.com was conceived to be a resource for Nebraska taxpayers, Treasurer Osborn believes every effort must be made to expand and improve the quality and thoroughness of the spending information. Additionally, Treasurer Osborn believes that adding new sections to the website will assist in attracting and retaining new users. The website will continue to be sustained and managed by State Treasury staff members.

**Costs Summary:**

The Nebraska State Treasurer has retained Pickering Creative Group, formerly known as aijalon creative communications, to provide the site updates. An estimate for the site has been set at \$20,000. This includes:

- Custom web site design
- Proofing sessions
- Navigation rollovers
- Custom formatting template
- Site infrastructure planning
- Site outline development
- Infrastructure setup
- Content population (up to 15 pages)

This estimate will create the site with some interactive tables based on information in the CAFR, Annual Budget Report, as well as other agency reports. It will include a searchable database, which will interact with the state records, to provide accurate spending information.

**1. CUSTOM DESIGN INTERFACE**

Included:

- Custom web site design
- Proofing sessions
- Navigation rollovers
- Custom formatting template

**Details:**

The site design will also include rollover states, and pop-out navigation. Rollover states are a design feature in which the navigation buttons will highlight or somehow visually change when the mouse is rolled over them. The pop-out navigation will display the sub-links in each area when a navigation button is moused over. The benefit to this type of navigation is that the visitor is able to view all of the pages available in each area, and directly visit any page on the site through fewer clicks. Our designers will ensure the pop-out navigation menus remain clean, consistent, and do not in any way interfere with the overall visitor experience.

This estimate also includes the development of a custom developed GRAVEL formatting template to accommodate specific page layouts and styles you want to achieve. Pickering Creative recommends usage of the custom template for the home page that will allow you

more flexibility in presenting information and featuring key areas of the web site to visitors.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE & CONTENT**

Included:

- Site infrastructure planning
- Site outline development
- Infrastructure setup
- Content population (up to 15 pages)

### **Details:**

The Nebraska State Treasurer's office and Pickering inc. will work together to update the current interface offered by the public spending site, nebraskaspending.com, to expand the information provided to the public by implementing the following projects:

- Interface and navigation updates
- Agency level expenditure reporting
- Updating current 2007 expenditures to 2008
- Adding Historical Data
- Creation of county budgets
- School systems

### **Interface and navigation updates**

Pickering has identified a few interface updates that would enhance the look and experience of the current site. Updates included in the estimate will be presented to the Nebraska State Treasurer's office and reviewed for overall feedback. Before implementation of the updates, all revisions will be tested and revised if necessary to ensure functionality in all major browsers. The updates include: 1) widening the design to accommodate wider screen resolutions (1024 width) 2) trail navigation adjustments to increase ease of use by the user 3) Navigation design revisions and development

### **Agency level expenditure reporting**

Individual pages will be created to display the 93 Agency level expenditures. All pages will utilize the same Flash technology that is currently used to show statewide expenditures. The map areas will have click-through functionality that will allow visitors to drill down to specific information including more charts, text and graphs. The pages of information will be editable by the GRAVEL user(s) and the actual charts and maps will be editable only by Pickering.

Design changes to the site will include adding a new 1st tier link.

### **Updating current 2007 expenditures to 2008**

The nebraskaspending.com site currently displays 2007 expenditures. Pickering will use the provided information to update data to 2008 figures. The information will be displayed in the same format as the current site. Pickering will also create navigation to previous year's data.

### **Historical Data section**

A Main Navigation item will be added to the site to accommodate a new area for historical data from the last ten years. A flash bar chart will graphically represent the data of five pages of xls document entitled "Schedule of Total Expenditures by agency all

funds last 10 years.xls”. The bar chart will feature click-through functionality to allow users the ability to drill down to additional information, in much the same way as the pie charts. Additional information may be displayed in pie charts or tabled data like the current site. Copywriting will be provided by State Treasurer’s office. The pages of information will be editable by the GRAVEL user(s) and the actual charts and maps will be editable only by Pickering

### **County Budget section**

This section is a new area of the site that will have a corresponding Main Navigation button. Along with the main navigation design and development will be the page layout and implementation to display all data. Early analysis of the data suggests that we will use a similar page style and data display to the rest of the site, but it may be determined that we need to add or develop custom display features within the scope and budget of the project.

Douglas county will be the first county to be displayed in this area. This area will allow for growth as counties are added. Copywriting will be provided by State Treasurer’s office. The pages of information will be editable by the GRAVEL user(s) and the actual charts and maps will be editable only by Pickering.

### **School Systems / Other Budgets section**

Omaha public schools information will be placed in this area. Similar to the layout of the county budgets area, the overall layout will be determined as the design process progresses.

We will use a similar page style and data display to the rest of the site, but it may be determined that we need to add or develop custom display features within the scope and budget of the project. This area will allow for growth as other budgets are added.

Copywriting will be provided by State Treasurer’s office. The pages of information will be editable by the GRAVEL user(s) and the actual charts and maps will be editable only by Pickering.

### **University of Nebraska Section**

This section of the site will include information about the University of Nebraska system. Users will be able to access this section either from a (to be added) Main Menu navigation button, or from the “State Dollars To Be Spent” pie chart, by clicking on the related wedge. The main page of the section will include a chart with a wedge for each of the campuses and some introductory text. There will also be a 2nd tier list of the campuses (visible throughout the section). Users can either click through the pie chart or on the 2nd tier to get to the campus page. Each Campus page will include 2 pie charts, one for Revenues (combined operating and non-operating) and Expenses. In addition, the data will show up in table form below.

### **GRAVEL WEB SITE MANAGEMENT**

Included:

- GRAVEL user license w/unlimited users
- GRAVEL training session(s)
- Unlimited Updates
- Scalable Architecture
- Unlimited Support
- Web site statistics
- Domain Name Management

**Details:**

Your web site will be implemented in to GRAVEL. A GRAVEL user account provides unlimited access to your web site from any computer with an internet connection. The GRAVEL Web Site Management System empowers users to maintain full control over the management of their web site.

GRAVEL training sessions will be provided to your selected users prior to the launch of the web site. A Pickering Creative staff member will conduct the training session, and show your users the processes for managing the information on your site. The training sessions can be conducted in house at Pickering Creative, or through an online demo where your users log in to a demo site and observe the training session. The details and scheduling of the training sessions will be outlined before the site is launched and the number of GRAVEL users has been determined.

**Unlimited Pages**

GRAVEL users have the ability to make an unlimited amount of changes or additions to their web site. Pickering Creative does not charge clients on the amount of pages they create as they grow their site.

**Scalable Architecture**

If your web site requires a customized feature to meet your individual needs, GRAVEL provides the flexibility for Pickering Creative developers to create a customized tool that clients can manage using GRAVEL. These may include: customized page layouts, online database browsers, or customized registration forms to name a few.

**Unlimited Support – Admin User**

GRAVEL users are also provided with unlimited technical support. The Admin user is able to call for support and have any questions answered by the Pickering Creative staff. GRAVEL support is the assistance and recommendations provided to your GRAVEL administrative user as they update the web site.

**Web Site Statistics**

GRAVEL will provide you a detailed breakdown of your web site statistics. Some of the statistics that are available include: individual page visits, total page views, top pages viewed each month and top referrers.

**Domain Name Management**

Pickering Creative provides management of your web site's domain name to ensure your web site and domain are protected and online at all times. This includes yearly renewals, and updates to server information should something change in the future.

**2. Interactive Map/ Chart Estimate****Project Definition:**

This estimate includes the re-design and creation of the State Spending Map to be housed on the NE State Spending site. The map will be created in Flash to reduce it in size and fit within the allotted content space in the new site design.

By utilizing Flash, a web site visitor will roll over each pie chart section. The map areas will still be clickable to view related information for each area selected. Once area is

selected information such as percentages and categories will be available. The pages of information will be editable by the GRAVEL user(s).

### **3. General Provisions**

Pickering Creative will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment, employed in the performance of this agreement, with respect to the person's hiring, tenure, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, or national origin.

Pickering Creative certifies that it maintains a drug-free workplace environment to ensure workers' safety and workplace integrity. Pickering Creative agrees to provide a copy of its drug-free workplace policy at any time upon request by the State.

With the exception of GRAVEL source code, all materials developed by Pickering Creative for the Treasurer shall be the property of the State Treasurer.

This Agreement contains the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof, and no waiver, alteration or modification of any of the provisions hereof or rights to act hereunder shall be binding unless in writing.

The situs of this agreement is the State of Nebraska. This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Nebraska.

### **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?**

Currently, Nebraskaspending.com is a singular source or database dedicated to state spending practices. While the information is available, it is scattered across various agencies and departments and the overwhelming concentration of raw data prohibits a reasonable person from accessing it in any sort of meaningful way. This confusion and lack of immediate access to state spending information places an undue burden on agency staff members who are eventually contacted and expected to locate the necessary data.

By providing a central clearinghouse of state spending information that is easily accessed through the use of the internet, NebraskaSpending.com prevents unnecessary communication between state agencies and the general public. As a result, agency employees can direct all spending related questions to the website and thus providing themselves with more disposable time to execute the services as outlined by their respective divisions.

Additionally, as is stated in Section 84-1201 of the Nebraska Statutes that deal with the creation of the Records Management Act: (3) *The increasing availability and use of computers is creating a growing demand for electronic access to public records, and agencies should use new technology to enhance public access to public records.* The NebraskaSpending.com project falls squarely within the boundaries of this statute because it is utilizing internet technology to provide the public with simple and immediate access to state spending records.

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

In 1997, LB590 expanded the duties of the State Records Board to include oversight and management of electronic access to state government information, including information provided over the internet. While this mission statement properly reflects the very spirit of NebraskaSpending.com, it also serves as the foundation for a strong, robust and long-lasting collaborative effort between state agencies and the users of this website.

NebraskaSpending.com has taken pre-existing financial information scattered throughout numerous agency sources and consolidated it into a simple and easy-to-read website. Further efforts will provide a consistent, accurate, and neutral resource that will immediately benefit members from every branch of our state government.

For example, our last project contained information from the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) available from the office of the Nebraska State Auditor; budgets available through the Department of Administrative Services (DAS); tax revenue available through the Department of Revenue; as well as the budgets of numerous state agencies available through the Legislative Fiscal Office. This project will do the same thing with the University of Nebraska system's CAFR and

Additionally, we believe NebraskaSpending.com has set the standard for how public/private partnerships are viewed in the future. Already, Treasurer Osborn has been working with individuals, organizations, and think-tanks from the private sector who share the belief that Nebraskans have a right to see how the state is spending their tax dollars and include them in the construction process. These partnerships will prove invaluable as the project moves forward and provide new perspectives on how government and private sector entities can come together for the benefit of the citizenry.

**10. Please describe how this project will improve the efficiency of state agency operations.**

Nebraskaspending.com provides a central clearing house for state government spending information in an easy to read format. Users of the site can access information directly rather than making requests to specific government agencies.

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

Nebraskaspending.com allows for other state and local entities to publish information about their budgets and expenditures on the site. Any agency is free to contact us and provide information about their finances.

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

Though it does not foster services for the Nebraska.gov portal, Nebraskaspending.com is a single site for the public to search for spending

information by the state of Nebraska. The site fosters better transparency and communication on state finances to the people of the State of Nebraska.

- 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.**

There is no license or regulation.

### **III. TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

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

**Hardware:**

Linux Distribution: CentOS Release 5  
Installation Type: Shared Host  
Storage: 3GB disk space (via RAID mirrored drives)  
CPU: Dual 2.4 GHz Xeon processors

**Software:**

Apache: 2.2.4  
APC 3.0.14  
ADODB 4.95a  
MySQL: 5.0.41  
OpenSSL 0.9.8e  
PEAR 1.6.1  
PHP: 5.2.3  
Smarty 2.6.18  
VIM 7.1  
SSH  
Flash 9.0

Several of the components listed above are supporting software for the system's operating system. The intended purpose of using flash will be to assist users in interpreting the data of State spending activities though a duplicated written and visual means.

**Communications:**

The Nebraska State Treasurer, University of Nebraska and the Pickering Group will work closely together to continue to provide state spending information to public users. This will require considerable communication efforts from all parties and will be achieved through meetings, email correspondences, and telephone conversations. Once deployed, the main mode for communication to the public will be through the website, but further promotional efforts will be conducted as part of the strategy provided by Pickering Creative in cooperation with the Nebraska State Treasurer's office.

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

- **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/>).**

The system will not be interfacing directly with other state systems during phase 1 of the project. All information will be provided independently to the system which will rely upon its own database. The web site will be tested in all state-supported browsers (Internet Explorer 6.0+, Netscape 7.2+, Firefox 1.5+, Opera 9.0+) for consistency in the display and usability features of the site. The site will also meet ADA section 508 compliance standards.

- **Compatibility with existing institutional and/or statewide infrastructure.** The system (which will be independent of existing state infrastructure) will conform to a stricter, more secure set of guidelines established by both Pickering Creative and State Treasury staff.

- **Reliability, security and scalability (future needs for growth or adaptation).** This system will be hosted through the First National Technology Solution data center located in Omaha, NE. The center currently meets SAS70 requirements for the on site security provided. The center is staffed 24X7X365 to ensure reliability and stability is provided for the system support. The system will be build with scalability in mind to meet future needs of the Treasurer's desire to expand the site. This will be accomplished within the planning phase of the site development.

**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.**

The system will not be interfacing directly with other state systems during phase 1 of the project. All information will be provided independently to the system which will rely upon its own database. The web site will be tested in all state-supported browsers (Internet Explorer 6.0+, Netscape 7.2+, Firefox 1.5+, Opera 9.0+) for consistency in the display and usability features of the site. The site will also meet ADA section 508 compliance standards.

**Describe how technical support will be provided.**

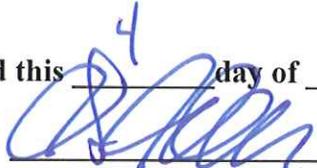
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**IV. CONTACT INFORMATION & SIGNATURE**

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

Trent Fellers: Director of NebraskaSpending.com

Phone # (402) 471-8884 E-mail tfellers@treasurer.org

Signed this 4 day of April, 2007  
  
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Agency Director

Please return to:

**Cathy Danahy**  
Nebraska State Records Board  
440 S 8<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 210  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 471-2745

*(Last updated 04/29/2008)*