

NEBRASKA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION

Project Proposal - Summary Sheet
Biennial Budget FY2009-2011

Project #09-01
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Project #	Agency	Project Title
09-01	Secretary of State	Election Night Reporting System

SUMMARY OF REQUEST (Executive Summary from the Proposal)

[Full text of all proposals are posted here: <http://nitc.ne.gov/nitc/documents/fy2009-11/index.html>]

The Secretary of State is the Chief Election Official for the State of Nebraska. As the Chief Election Official there are many functions that occur during an election cycle. One of most important functions is the reporting of election results on election night to the public, media and candidates. The Election Night Reporting (ENR) System is an integral program that allows the Secretary of State to perform these duties. The current ENR System has been in place since 1996. With new technologies and program languages available, we believe that this project could allow us to better report election results to public, media and candidates. We are currently looking at vendors to host this service for our office.

The Election Night Reporting System allows the public and the media the ability to check election results frequently (default = 5 mins). The ENR System was created by volunteers for the State of Nebraska in 1996. The State of Nebraska was one of five states that performed this reporting service to the public at that time. Since 1996, the Secretary of State's Office has made the investment in software upgrades every election cycle to add the functionality needed (e.g. creating comma separated values (.CSV) files for the media to import election night data into their equipment). The investment per election cycle has been between \$15,000 to \$25,000.

FUNDING SUMMARY

	Total	Prior Exp	FY09 Appr/Reappr	FY10 Request	FY11 Request	Future Add Request
Other Operating Costs						
Personnel Cost	\$0					
Supplies & Materials	\$0					
Travel	\$0					
Other	\$180,000			90,000	90,000	
Total	\$180,000	\$0	\$0	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$0
Capital Expenditures						
Hardware	\$0					
Software	\$350,000			350,000		
Network	\$0					
Other	\$100,000			100,000		
Total	\$450,000	\$0	\$0	\$450,000	\$0	\$0
Total Request	\$630,000	\$0	\$0	\$540,000	\$90,000	\$0

PROJECT SCORE

Section	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3	Mean	Maximum Possible
Goals, Objectives, and Projected Outcomes	4	15	11	10.0	15
Project Justification / Business Case	5	23	16	14.7	25
Technical Impact	7	17	15	13.0	20
Preliminary Plan for Implementation	2	8	10	6.7	10
Risk Assessment	5	9	9	7.7	10
Financial Analysis and Budget	6	17	15	12.7	20
TOTAL				65	100

REVIEWER COMMENTS

Section	Strengths	Weaknesses
Goals, Objectives, and Projected Outcomes	- I believe the goal of this project is very worthwhile.	-The agency did not provide or address measurements or assessment methods to verify the project outcome, nor provided any data supporting relationship to their technology plan. - No explanation of \$280,000 in other categories - relation to project goals
Project Justification / Business Case	- Project justification seems to make sense in something the state should do.	- Did not provide any return on investment justification. Did not address other potential solutions. Did not address state or federal mandates. - More detail needed on cost/benefit vs current system
Technical Impact	- Relevance is limited to analysis of new vs existing systems.	- Technical elements are not present. Strengths and weaknesses are not evaluated. Does not address compatibility or security issues. - My sense is that the agency thinks the entry of data will be a lot easier with this system than it is with the current system. I just don't have enough information at this point to determine whether or not that's true as interfacing with over 90 counties in Nebraska each having some version of an election reporting manager may be daunting. - Do all counties have ERM systems which can automatically feed this proposed system?
Preliminary Plan for Implementation		- Minimal information provided. Proper analysis could not be made. - Not enough information at this point to give a very good assessment of the implementation plan
Risk Assessment	- Assuming an outside vendor may in fact host the system I think the risks have been identified	- Barriers and risks are inadequately identified. - Cost / quality of vendor encryption techniques?
Financial Analysis and Budget		- Nearly a third of the budget is undefined in the Other category - Further explanation of \$280,000 "other" costs?

TECHNICAL PANEL COMMENTS

Technical Panel Checklist				Technical Panel Comment
	Yes	No	Unknown	
1. The project is technically feasible?	✓			
2. The proposed technology is appropriate for the project?			✓	
3. The technical elements can be accomplished within the proposed timeframe and budget?			✓	

NITC COMMENTS

- Tier 2 (Recommended. High strategic importance to the agency and/or the state.)

APPENDIX: AGENCY RESPONSE TO REVIEWER COMMENTS



STATE OF NEBRASKA

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November 3, 2008

Lt. Governor Rich Sheehy
Chair, Nebraska Information Technology Commission
P.O. Box 94863
Lincoln, NE 68509

Chairman Sheehy & NITC Members,

I am pleased to present my agency's responses to the IT Project Proposals that we submitted on September 15, 2008. My agency's responses were made after the reviewers published their assessments at the State Government Council on October 9, 2008. An explanation for each project is written below and also in the following pages for the NITC's review.

As Secretary of State, one of my duties is to serve as Nebraska's Chief Election Officer. It is in that role, I instructed my staff to research alternatives for our aging Election Night Reporting System and for replacement of server hardware for the Nebraska Central Voter Registration System (NECVRS).

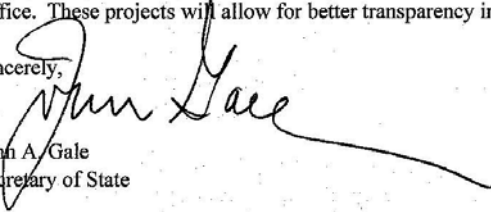
- IT Project Proposal 09-01 (Election Night Reporting) will enable my office to have more transparency by presenting election nights results in several data formats to the public and media.
- IT Project Proposal 09-02 (NECVRS Hardware Replacement) will allow my office to carry on the federal mandate of maintaining Nebraska's centralized voter registration system in accordance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-252).

I also serve as the State Records Administrator under Nebraska Statute §84-1203. The introduction of the Nebraska Unified Collaboration Project under the management of the Office of CIO has provided the ability to communicate and collaborate in a more efficient manner across all state government. While state agencies manage the paper and film records very well, the ability for agencies to properly manage their electronic records is not yet present. Therefore, I ordered my Records Management Division staff to research electronic records management vendors with the cooperation of the Office of CIO.

- IT Project Proposal 09-03 (Enterprise Content Management) would be a phased approach to allow State Agencies to retain, index, manage and dispose of email records according to Schedule 124 (General Records) or Agency specific schedules. Other phases would include structured and unstructured electronic records.

I appreciate your careful review and consideration of these projects for the Secretary of State's Office. These projects will allow for better transparency in state government for years to come.

Sincerely,


John A. Gale
Secretary of State

09-01 – Election Night Reporting System – Agency Response

Goals, Objectives and Project Outcomes

Strengths - I believe the goal of this project is very worthwhile.

Weaknesses - The agency did not provide or address measurements or assessment methods to verify the project outcome, nor provided any data supporting relationship to their technology plan. No explanation of \$280,000 in other categories in relation to project goals.

Agency response – Our projected outcome is to acquire and deploy an Election Night Reporting System that enhances the Secretary of State's ability to provide customized, detailed views through graphical or numerical means. Our office will utilize the proper measurement/assessment methodologies in implementing a new Election Night Reporting System. The Secretary of State's Office is looking at SOE Software as a model for this software. The vendor's URL is <http://www.soesoftware.com/connect-enr.html>.

The breakdown of the \$280,000 listed in the "other" categories is as follows: Maintenance for 2 years is \$180,000 (\$90,000 a year). The remaining \$100,000 is a one-time licensing fee.

Project Justification / Business Case

Strengths - Project justification seems to make sense in something the state should do.

Weaknesses - Did not provide any return on investment justification. Did not address other potential solutions. Did not address state or federal mandates. More detail needed on cost/benefit vs. current system

Agency response – The Election Night Reporting System in its current form requires in depth knowledge of Microsoft Access and SQL to perform the normal operating functions of the system. This requires significant IT resources to perform election functions. If a new ENR system is acquired then IT resources within the SOS Office could take on other projects as needed by the agency.

We have not seen any other vendors in this arena, other than SOS Software. There are no federal or state statutes requiring the State to perform this function however, State has reported election night results to the public and the media since 1996.

The current ENR system has provided transparency and accountability to the public in how the State administrates elections in Nebraska, but the system is difficult to operate. A new ENR system will allow the SOS to better function internally by allowing election personnel to operate the ENR system, thus freeing an IT resource. It will also enable state and county election officials to statistically analyze voting patterns by precinct, so voter education and voter outreach can be targeted. Counties will not have to key election totals into a website; they will export them directly to the ENR system in their vote tabulation systems native format. Then the State will be able to review the totals, checking for any discrepancies or data anomalies before publishing to the public and media.

Technical Impact

Strengths - Relevance is limited to analysis of new vs. existing systems.

Weaknesses - Technical elements are not present. Strengths and weaknesses are not evaluated. Does not address compatibility or security issues. My sense is that the agency thinks the entry of data will be a lot easier with this system than it is with the current system. I just don't have enough information at this point to determine whether

or not that's true as interfacing with over 90 counties in Nebraska each having some version of an election reporting manager may be daunting. Do all counties have ERM systems which can automatically feed this proposed system?

Agency response – All of the State's vote tabulation equipment and software is compatible with the software referenced in the report. All counties will sign on to the ENR system utilizing a username and password over an website encrypted with an SSL certificate. The SOS will work with the vendor to adhere to NITC Password Guidelines. Election totals are then transmitted over an FTPS (FTP/SSL) from the counties to the vendor. Each county would be able to change their totals only.

All Nebraska counties will have ERM in 2009.

Preliminary Plan for Implementation

Strengths – None reported by reviewers

Weaknesses - Minimal information provided. Proper analysis could not be made; not enough information at this point to give a very good assessment of the implementation plan.

Agency response – Not enough of information to provide a preliminary plan for implementation.

Risk Assessment

Strengths - Assuming an outside vendor may in fact host the system I think the risks have been identified

Weaknesses - Barriers and risks are inadequately identified. Cost / quality of vendor encryption techniques?

Agency response – Until the State can get a contract in place the quality of encryption is unknown. Cost has already been detailed in the budgetary numbers submitted to the NITC and DAS.

Financial Analysis and Budget

Strengths – None reported by reviewers

Weaknesses - Nearly a third of the budget is undefined in the other category; further explanation of \$280,000 "other" costs?

Agency response – The breakdown of the \$280,000 listed in the "other" categories is as follows: Maintenance for 2 years is \$180,000 (\$90,000 a year). The remaining \$100,000 is a one-time licensing fee by the vendor.