

**NSRB Grant Application
Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Online Fee Collection**

1. Name of agency applying for grant
Nebraska Department of Agriculture (lead), Nebraska Corn Board, Nebraska Ethanol Board, Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board, Nebraska Wheat Board
2. Title or brief description of the project
Online Fee Collection for Commodity Checkoff Fees. The Department of Agriculture collects, reports and summarizes statutory fees for the Nebraska corn Board, Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board, Nebraska Wheat Board, and beginning in October, 2001, the Nebraska Ethanol Board. This grant will support development of an online system for reporting data and transmitting fees electronically.
3. Grant request amount
\$7,500
4. Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project?
No.
5. If yes, provide any statutory reference or authorization for the fee
Not applicable.
6. Please describe the project in detail
Since about 1976, the Department of Agriculture has administered a joint fee collection program for different commodities. By statute, collections are made quarterly by first purchasers, and monthly for grain put under loan through the USDA Farm Services Agency. At the time the program was started, the commodity programs were a budget program within the Department of Agriculture. Over time, the Nebraska Wheat Board, Nebraska Corn Board and Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board became separate agencies. However, the fee collection responsibility was retained within the Dept. of Agriculture.
The agency system to process information for the fee collection program has undergone several changes over the years, but remains a slow, inflexible application that needs to be updated. Grant funds from another source are being sought to support the work necessary to upgrade the back-end application. The purpose of this grant application is to support the work of Nebrask@ Online to develop the eGovernment portion of the application to allow reporting of data and online payment by those who collect the fees.
For example, elevators and other entities could report data online and make payments via an electronic funds transfer or via credit card. Users would be provided a web-enabled form to enter data and fee information. The information would be transmitted electronically via Nebrask@ Online to the Department's system where final processing would occur.

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

Beneficiaries of this service will include purchasers of agricultural commodities who are responsible for collecting check-off fees, reporting information and paying the fees to the Department. These include grain elevators, the USDA Farm Services Agency, and large corporate commodity purchasers such as Conagra, Peavey, Cargill, Scoular, and others. Contact has been made with the Nebraska Grain & Feed Association, whose members make up the largest percentage of reporting entities. They as well as several of the corporate purchasers have indicated a strong interest in using electronic filing.

Approximately 700 quarterly reports are filed and a total of about \$7,725,000 in fees are collected. We hope to see a considerable amount of this volume move to electronic filing and payment once the system is operational.

The Department of Agriculture and commodity boards will also be significant beneficiaries of the program. Error checking built into the application will reduce the number of reporting errors that must be dealt with by agency staff. The efficiency of reporting for agency purposes and a much easier method of retrieving information from the database will improve the overall efficiency of the process. Commodity boards will have more timely information, and the state should benefit from quicker processing of fee payments.

8. Estimated timeline for completion

Changes to the internal system are scheduled for completion by the end of 2001 to accommodate the need to begin collecting fees for the Ethanol Board, a requirement set in state law. We plan to have the online reporting and fee collection portion of the project completed by April 1, 2002.

9. Agency contribution to the project (labor, equipment, etc.)

We anticipate having the revisions to the agency system provided by in-house programmers, utilizing our existing AS400 platform. Estimates for agency personnel time devoted to the project are approximately 350 hours.

- 10. A. Has this project every been submitted as a budget request (explain)?**

No

- 11. B. Does the project require additional statutory authority (explain)?**

No.

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

Grant funds are requested to support initial development of the online filing and reporting system by Nebrask@ Online. Any ongoing costs for support and maintenance of the online system will be negotiated with Nebrask@ Online and paid from agency funds. Ongoing maintenance and support of the internal application will be part of the agency's annual operating budget.

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

Elevators and other entities will be able to report data online and make payments via an electronic funds transfer or via credit card. Users would be provided a web-enabled form to enter data and fee information. The information would be transmitted electronically via Nebrask@ Online to the Department's system where final processing would occur.

12. Please describe how this project will 1) improve the efficiency of agency operations; 2) facilitate collaboration among state agencies; 3) facilitate collaboration between state agencies and other public institutions; 4) support public/private partnerships in the delivery of public services (you may respond to any or all of these criteria in your answer)

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The application will enhance existing collaboration between the Department of Agriculture and the various boards. More timely and accurate information can be provided to the boards for their use. Transfer of funds becomes more efficient and cost-effective. The grant proposal builds on an existing public/private partnership between the Records Board and the network manager of Nebrask@ Online.

13. Contact person information

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