

State of Nebraska

**Department of Administrative Services –
State Budget Division**
*in partnership with the
Nebraska Office of the Chief Information Officer*



Administrative Services State Budget Division

NEBRASKA BUDGET REQUEST AND REPORTING SYSTEM

2009 NASCIO Recognition Award Nomination

**Category 6: Digital Government: Government to Government
(G to G)**

B. Executive Summary

The budget request process is used by the State of Nebraska to assist in the development of the most significant State public policy statement and plan for the use of public human and financial resources-its budget. The State budget embodies the policy and financial priorities for State government. Consequently, it is imperative that the budget system software utilized for the development of agency budget requests provides decision-makers with information that allows them to make informed, insightful decisions regarding the allocation of public resources. Such a system must increase and improve access to, use, and presentation of budget request information by elected and appointed leaders to facilitate the best possible decision-making. The system must also make budget request information readily accessible to citizens when and where they want it. In summary, it creates opportunity for greater participation in the public budget process and understanding about State government by all persons.

The budget request system should also be easy to use with improved work productivity for persons carrying out State budget responsibilities. It should utilize generally accepted technologies that are easily obtained and that do not require additional expense for agencies. For about a decade up until April 2008, the Nebraska state budget request process included an application employing technology available in the mid 1990s. That application required remote access via a third-party application requiring licensing, and was written in a programming language which was no longer supported by its developer. This system had outlived its usefulness and its continued use would have required significant enhancement and posed an unacceptable risk due to its lack of vendor support. Additionally, there have been significant changes in business process, hardware, software, and communications technology in the past ten years that produced a great opportunity for improvement.

With all of this in mind and with the support of the Governor and Legislature, the new Nebraska Budget Request and Reporting System was formally released in April 2008. The Nebraska Budget Request and Reporting System represents cutting edge use of technology for a State budget request system. This web-based system was built "in-house" by the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Administrative Services State Budget Division, with support from many State agency staff who consulted, tested, and recommended improvements for the system.

The system is accessible, anywhere and anytime, allowing for maximum ease of access and the most efficient use of human and physical resources to accomplish budget request submission. It also makes a phenomenal advance in the transparency of agency budget requests by moving them from the file cabinet to the World Wide Web.

C. Description

For about a decade up until April 2008, the Nebraska state budget request process included an application employing technology available in the mid 1990s. That application required remote access via a third-party application requiring licensing, and was written in a programming language which was no longer supported by its developer. This system had outlived its usefulness and its continued use would have required significant enhancement and posed an unacceptable risk due to its lack of vendor support.

Prior to development of a system as important to the enterprise as a budget request and reporting system, it is incumbent upon the State government to ensure that automation projects relate to priorities of the implementing agency, the State, and its citizens as well and that it is truly focused on business objectives. To this end, the Nebraska State Budget Division set out to conduct a Business Case Assessment. The Business Case Assessment described business needs, gaps in how these needs were being met in the current environment, and alternative solutions to meeting the needs. It also assessed the alternatives against design, cost/benefit, and risk criteria, and made recommendations based on those assessments.

Three different alternatives were examined. They included:

1. to modify the existing system,
2. build a new system in-house, or
3. buy and modify a commercial off-the-shelf application.

After completing a comprehensive assessment of the alternative approaches, it was determined that the approach that provided the best opportunity for success for Nebraska was to build a new system in-house. This approach maximized available technology and created the greatest opportunity for Nebraskans to know and participate in the governance of their State. This approach also utilized and built technical and process expertise within Nebraska state government to develop and support this mission-critical business process. Building in-house was determined to be the most cost effective solution while posing the least risk--a "win-win" for Nebraska.

Beginning in April 2008, all Nebraska State agencies, boards, and commissions used the new Nebraska Budget Request and Reporting System (NBRRS) to prepare and submit their budget request for the 2009 – 2011 budget biennium. The NBRRS is a web-based application requiring only internet access, a web browser, and a Nebraska Directory Services (NDS) User ID and password to access the system. The system was developed and continues to be maintained and enhanced using an Open Source Integrated Development Environment (IDE) called Eclipse. The system was designed, developed, and deployed by a small group of developers writing code in Java, an Object



Oriented Programming Language, following industry standards and with an approach that provides vendor independence and platform flexibility. Java Server Faces and Cascading Style Sheets are among the technologies used to display the information to the end-user in a web browser. Custom Java handlers manage the business logic and calculations. Stored procedures are used to write and retrieve data from the clustered relational databases on the back-end. In short, the NBRRS is a web-based application offering end-users 24/7 access from anyplace at any time.

Submission of agency budget requests for the 2009 – 2011 biennium concluded in September 2008 with the electronic submittal and subsequent posting of all budget requests in electronic format to the World Wide Web. This entirely electronic submission and reporting process results in savings of time and money for both state agency finance staff and

the public. First, state agencies are no longer required to submit paper hard copies (up to 6 identical copies in some cases for the various recipients with the replaced system), saving time and money previously expended for the cost of the paper itself, sorting, binding and delivery. Second, interested citizens and news media no longer have to rummage through a file cabinet in the State Capitol



State Agencies, Boards and Commissions 2009-2011 Biennial Budget Requests

-  Agency Fund Type Summary - Operations and Aid (10/16/2008)
-  Agency Capital Construction Summary (10/15/2008)

Agency Budget Request Documents

Agency Number	Agency Name	Functional Area	Status
003	LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL	General Government	
005	SUPREME COURT	Public Safety	
007	OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR	General Government	
008	OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR	General Government	
009	SECRETARY OF STATE	General Government	
010	AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS	General Government	
011	ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE	Public Safety	
012	STATE TREASURER'S OFFICE	Public Finance	
013	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	Human Resources Development	
014	PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION	Economic Development	
015	BOARD OF PAROLE	Public Safety	
016	DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE	Public Finance	
017	DEPARTMENT OF AERONAUTICS	Transportation	
018	DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources	

Building to review budget requests submitted by the various State agencies. Agency budget requests are now only a click away. Go to the NBRRS budget request reporting site at <https://das-nebs.ne.gov/public/faces/budgetRequestDocuments.jsp> to view agency budget requests submitted for the 2009 – 2011 biennium.

D. Significance

The budget request process is used by the State of Nebraska to assist in the development of the most significant State public policy statement and plan for the use of

public human and financial resources-its budget. Such a system must increase and improve access to, use, and presentation of budget request information by elected and appointed leaders to facilitate the best possible decision-making.

The Nebraska Budget Request and Reporting System puts the emphasis on explanation and justification, not fund numbers and accounting codes. Using an “Issues” functionality, an agency can identify the specific agency goals, objectives, outcomes, cost-drivers, activities or initiatives for which the agency is requesting a change in appropriated resources. The “Issue” is self-defined by the agency on one screen with all of the justification necessary to support its request encapsulated within the identified Issue rather than buried within expenditure account codes on three different screens as had been the case with the previous system. This information becomes a “decision point” for the Governor and Legislature. The Issues submitted for consideration can also be much more easily understood by the public than has historically been the case with the accounting dependent information presented in the previous budget request system. Decision-making is allowed to become much more policy focused.

Of significance from an end-user perspective is the balance and edit functionality built into the system. A Balance and Edit Checking screen is provided in the NBRRS which offers an electronic “review” of an agency budget request to ensure technical accuracy and completeness. The balance and edit functionality identifies elements of the budget request that require adjustment to meet various technical requirements for budget submission.

An additional significant feature for end-users, there is no need for agency finance staff to feel tied down to their office chairs or to the State network. All that is required to access the application for budget request preparation and submission is web-access, a web browser, and an easy to obtain Nebraska Directory Services User ID and password.

E. Benefit of the Project

The development of the NBRRS has provided many benefits to the State Budget Division, State agencies, decision-makers, and citizens. The system has provided the State Budget Division with a new tool to replace a dated and vulnerable technology with state-of-the-art technology. The system provides agency end-users with an easy-to-use application which offers improved work productivity for persons carrying out State budget responsibilities. It also uses generally accepted technologies that are easily obtained and that do not require additional expense for agencies. Decision-makers are provided with information that allows them to make informed, insightful decisions

regarding the allocation of public resources. Finally, the system makes budget request information readily accessible to citizens when and where they want it. Citizens and other interested persons are able to view submitted budget requests via the World Wide Web from a place of their choosing. In summary, it creates opportunity for greater participation in the public budget process and understanding about State government by all persons.

Official Nebraska Government Website

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NEBRASKA BUDGET REQUEST AND REPORTING SYSTEM

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THIS IS A GOVERNMENT COMPUTER SYSTEM. UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS IS PROHIBITED. ANYONE USING THIS SYSTEM IS SUBJECT TO MONITORING. UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS OR ATTEMPTS TO USE, ALTER, DESTROY OR DAMAGE DATA, PROGRAMS OR EQUIPMENT COULD RESULT IN CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.



The Great Seal of the State of Nebraska is prominently displayed in the background. It features a central figure, a Native American, holding a bow and arrow, standing on a rocky outcrop. The seal is circular with the text 'GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF NEBRASKA' and 'MARCH 1ST 1868'. The background of the seal depicts a landscape with mountains, a river, and a plow.