



## Entry Form 2017 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

**Entry Deadline: Thursday, June 15, 2017, Midnight ET**

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).**

**Entry Title:** Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

---

---

**Category:**

---

**Subcategory:**

---

**Entry Summary:** A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**HFA:**

---

**HFA Staff Contact:**

---

**Phone:**

---

**Email:**

---

**Visual Aids:**

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF?    Yes        No

**Payment:**

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.  
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).

***“A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity.”  
~Dalai Lama***

***NIFA recognizes that we are in an interconnected data loop with all of our customers and constituents. We are aware of the shared digital risks posed by the increased and daily advances in technology and believe we have an obligation to do our part to ensure that we provide for systems which are modern, protected and well-managed at every point in our operations.***

The Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (“NIFA”) continually strives to be on the cutting edge of providing meaningful information to our constituents, partners, and legislative representatives. When faced with a new statutory requirement to provide publicly available transaction level data and other financial information, NIFA took steps to ensure that its data was provided in a comprehensive and “cyber-secure” manner by creating a NIFA “Transparency” website.

#### **The Challenge:**

In 2016, the Nebraska legislature amended the Nebraska Taxpayer Transparency Act (the “Act”) by broadening the scope of state entities mandated to comply with the Act’s financial data disclosure requirements. As a “state independent instrumentality” NIFA is now subject to the Act. After a detailed review of the state’s transparency website, NIFA seized the opportunity to create its own transparency website. This allowed NIFA to ensure a greater level of control and protection of NIFA information by implementing tailored cyber-security protocols, while still providing meaningful disclosure of financial information to the public.

One need only read any national newspaper to realize the daily challenges to our country and particularly to governmental agencies of data security and cyber-crime. In the United States alone, thousands of ransom attacks and phishing schemes happen every day to computer systems. Cyber-security risks are very real and having transaction level data readily available can pose serious threats to an organization unless well-protected. Unfortunately, cyber-risk materially increases each day and must be managed; but there is a natural tension between “transparency” and cyber-security that must be grappled with—and through [spending.nifa.org](http://spending.nifa.org), NIFA’s Transparency website, NIFA has done just that.

#### **The Objective:**

NIFA’s objective and overall goal was to create a website on a network with “protection, detection and immediate response” capabilities and other cyber-security protocols that have been determined to be best practices for our industry as established by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. However, in ensuring that the data on NIFA’s website was protected from improper use, NIFA did not want to compromise the public’s ability to have access to and full disclosure of the information.

**Effective Use of Resources:**

NIFA engaged an outside third party professional website developer to create NIFA's Transparency website. In doing so, we were focused on overall threat management and mindful of the need for protocols and standards that addressed the internal and perimeter defense of our cyber-systems. While designing the website, NIFA wanted to ensure that following resources were part of the process:

1. Crisis analysis software
2. Front door traffic and threat analysis
3. 24-hour monitoring and attack/attempt reporting
4. Staff and response team training
5. Screening software targeted to detect user place of origin, user length of stay, depth of downloads and valid user e-mails
6. Compliance with cyber-risk insurance

In an additional effort to secure the site, a CAPTCHA (a backronym for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) has also been incorporated, requiring anyone seeking access to the site to prove they are human by identifying visual items from a picture. The end result is a secure website that provides meaningful data which is easily accessed by the public.

NIFA continues to use outside professionals, which together with NIFA's skilled and well-trained professional staff, help us to operate our computer systems within the law and with very high levels of computer security.

**The Benefits:**

An obvious benefit of the NIFA Transparency website is that it ensures comprehensive disclosure and complete transparency without increasing the risk of liability for NIFA. The user also benefits from being able to access NIFA's data in one location that is easy to find and available in a user-friendly, searchable format. In sharing information with the public, NIFA strives to be 100% timely, accurate and transparent. Accordingly, the website provides greater transparency of NIFA operations by providing timely and accurate information on and access to NIFA's:

- Revenue sources
- Detailed expenditure data
- Operating budget
- Contracts with third parties
- Information about the Nebraska Opportunity Fund which is used to invest a portion of NIFA's net profits in designated community development projects throughout the state

The expenditure categories can be searched by using keywords or by using a category sort option allowing the user to find information quickly. In addition, any line-item expenditure with an associated contract provides for a link to a copy of that contract. The website also contains a separate contracts database that allows users to search through all active and expired contracts.

**The Costs:**

There are numerous reports of the major types of cyber-crime being perpetrated against information systems, with devastating effects, because of open, simple, public facing interfaces. Cyber-criminals are turning increasingly to more direct means of theft and remedies are expensive, ransoms can be in the millions of dollars, and daily operations can be disrupted for an unforeseen amount of time. A cyber security incident or breach related to its data unnecessarily exposes NIFA to the risk of lawsuits and other claims against the assets of NIFA, as well as impedes NIFA operations and our ability to provide valuable services to our customers. The costs associated with implementing the Transparency website are minimal compared to the potential costs NIFA could face responding to and recovering from a malicious cyber-attack. The additional benefits to NIFA's operations, its customers and constituents provided by NIFA's cyber-secure website vastly outweigh the costs of implementation.

**The Success:**

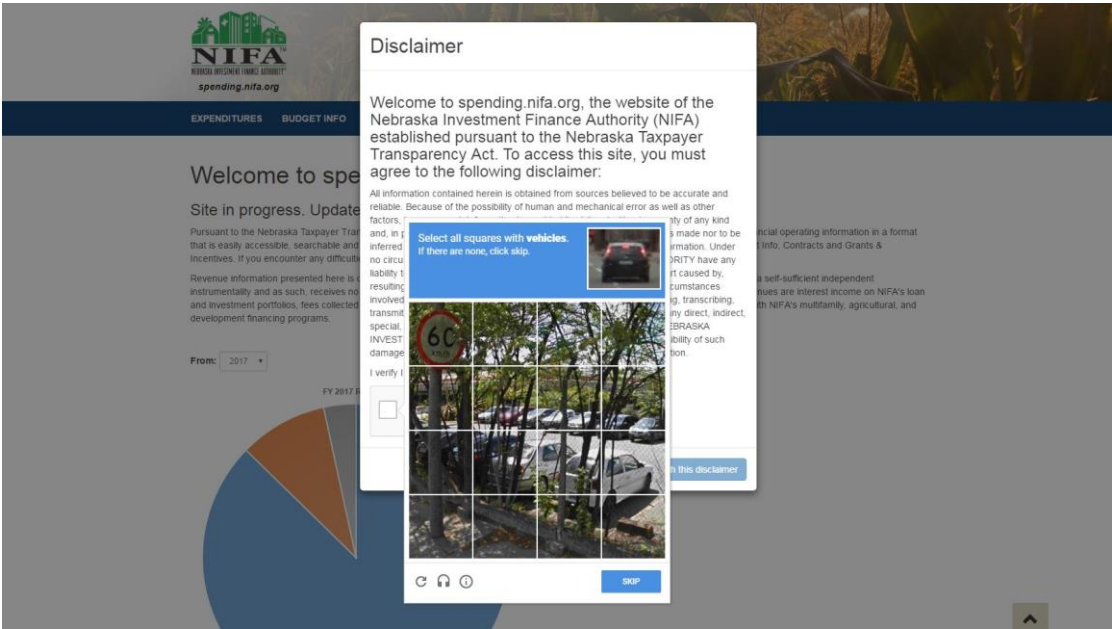
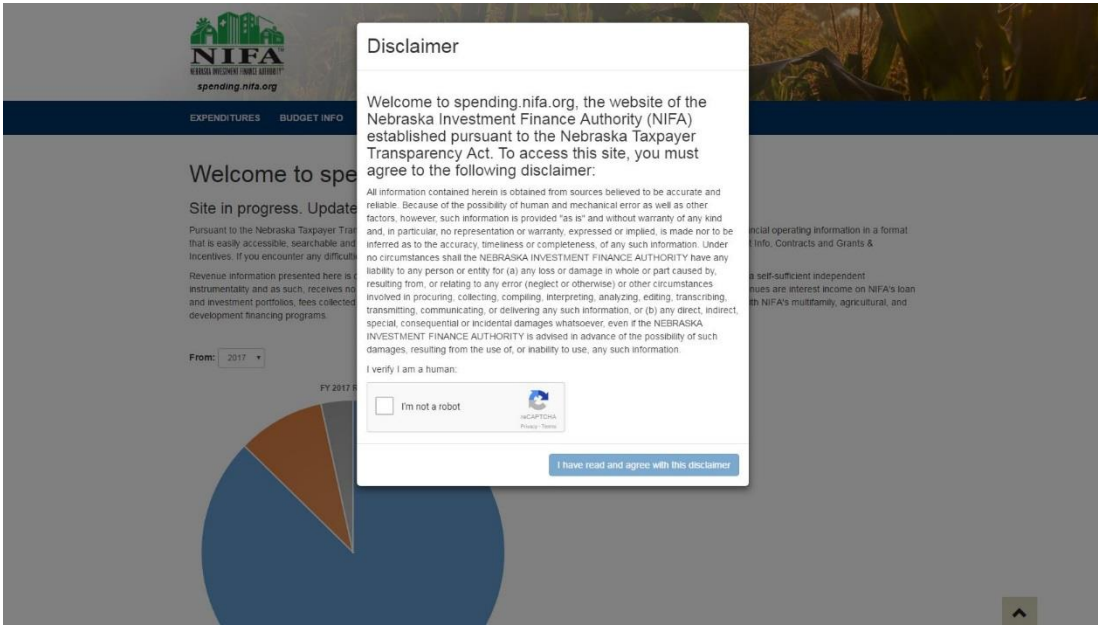
NIFA launched its completed Transparency website in May 2017. Through innovative technology, NIFA established a website and implemented protocols for the management and monitoring of its financial data, including cyber-security protections that best fit the needs of NIFA's particular operations. The website succeeds in providing a balanced approach to achieving NIFA's objective to disclose financial data in a transparent fashion and its obligation to protect such data from misuse and mitigate risk.

NIFA remains committed to good public policy by acknowledging the joint ownership of public information and taking responsibility to manage our shared data pursuant to verifiable "best practices" while fully complying with the disclosure requirements of the Act. NIFA's innovative approach to providing information to the public on its secure website undoubtedly strengthens NIFA's operations and helps to achieve our strategic objectives.

We encourage you to visit the NIFA transparency website at the following link:

<https://spending.nifa.org/>

# CAPTCHA on Homepage of NIFA's Transparency website



# Homepage of website after passing security checks



[EXPENDITURES](#) [BUDGET INFO](#) [CONTRACTS](#) [GRANTS & INCENTIVES](#)

## Welcome to spending.nifa.org

Site in progress. Updates coming soon.

Pursuant to the Nebraska Taxpayer Transparency Act, the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) is responsible for posting financial operating information in a format that is easily accessible, searchable and available to the public. This site consists of five components — Revenue, Expenditures, Budget Info, Contracts and Grants & Incentives. If you encounter any difficulties or have a question about spending.nifa.org, please contact us at [info@nifa.org](mailto:info@nifa.org).

Revenue information presented here is derived from NIFA's audited financial statements, which are published on [www.nifa.org](http://www.nifa.org). NIFA is a self-sufficient independent instrumentality and as such, receives no allocation of funding from State of Nebraska revenues and receipts. The sources of NIFA revenues are interest income on NIFA's loan and investment portfolios, fees collected through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, and other fees received in connection with NIFA's multifamily, agricultural, and development financing programs.

From:

