2005 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

APPLICATION

Deadline: April 4, 2005

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1.   Program Name eFolio Minnesota^{TM}

2.   Administering Agency Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

3.   Contact Person (Name and Title) Paul Wasko – Director eFolio Minnesota

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8.   E-mail Address paul.wasko@so.mnscu.edu

9.   Web site Address www.mnscu.edu (organization) www.efoliominnesota.com (project)

10. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities launched eFolio Minnesota to provide Minnesota students and residents the ability to construct and deploy a free, multi-media, web-based showcase of their educational and workforce accomplishments. This web-based electronic portfolio reflects a commitment to helping Minnesotans succeed in life and work.

11. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? **Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on May 1, 2005 to be considered.**

eFolio Minnesota was formally launched in August of 2002.

12. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address? **Indicate how the program applies to the "change driver" that you listed above.**

We live in a multi-media world!! Students and those that use education and workforce services have expectations that higher education organizations are providing tools and services to not only survive but thrive in this multimedia jungle. In proposing eFolio Minnesota as part of a Congressional Award, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities was looking to develop a service that could be focus on the education and workforce needs of an individual consumer. Portfolios were a natural area to focus on since they have been widely used throughout education and workforce organizations. The challenge here was to not design something that would force individual consumers to have to physically interact with one of our many institutions but rather to allow the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to reach out to every person in the state in a very personal and value added way. This thought was one of the primary factors in helping to design eFolio Minnesota.

13. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Summer 2001 – Release of a RFP for the project
August 2001 – Contract executed with Avenet, Inc.
Summer 2002 – Beta testing of tool set
August 2002 – Launch of eFolio Minnesota
May 2003 – Media launch of eFolio Minnesota
March 2005 – eFolio Minnesota passes the 28,000 registered users mark

14. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

This project certainly did not invent the notion of individual portfolios or even the notion of using electronic means to create and display portfolio information. What this project did do however was to "invent" the notion of a statewide, web-based electronic portfolio infrastructure that was designed to support the education and workforce goals of for ALL Minnesotans.   In other portfolio projects, the user usually constructs the portfolio as part of a particular class or program. Hence, the portfolio is tied to both the program and the individual. The difference here with eFolio Minnesota is that the portfolio is tied directly to the individual users. You could start building your portfolio as part of your middle school experience, continue to use this same portfolio during high school where it might be useful for college and scholarship applications, use the same portfolio to support to support class and program requirements within college and then take, again, this same portfolio and translate this into a multi-media resume in order to help obtain employment. Even during the course of your employment you might use this same portfolio to document your achievements as a way to support promotions or performance reviews.

In short, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities deployed the ultimate 21st century backpack/briefcase!

15. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

Costs associated with the initial start-up of eFolio Minnesota include:

Out of pocket costs
 - Contract work with Avenet $270,000
 - Hardware investments $100,000

In kind costs
 - Project staff $60,000
 - Meetings and related costs $10,000

16. What are the program's annual operational costs?

Annual operating costs are less than $100,000 per year. This includes application maintenance of $50,000 plus staffing and system costs.

17. How is the program funded?

Initial funding came through a Congressional Award. Ongoing funding is primarily provided through Minnesota Online (www.minnesotaonline.org) with additional funds being provided by other state agencies and other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities internal resources.

18. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No

19. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

How's this:

eFolioMN is a custom, 100% web-based application, leveraging a proprietary combination of core Microsoft technologies (Internet Information Server, SQLServer, Active Server Pages, and more) with XML, XSL and traditional HTML/CSS. It was, and continues to be, jointly developed by Avenet Web Solutions, LLC of Saint Paul, MN, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' own technology team.

The application is hosted on an array of nine servers with load balancing provided via paired Netscaler boxes.

20. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Yes
Paul Wasko – see above
Gary Langer – same address as above 651-649-5772 gary.langer@so.mnscu.edu
Linda Baer – same address as above 651-282-5515 linda.baer@so.mnscu.edu

21. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

Not to our knowledge. Although Indiana is considering something similar and we have had discussions with other states, and nationalities, about following the "Minnesota model."

22. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

Yes. As of March 2005, there are over 28,000 registered users.

23. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

We are in the process of a formal evaluation of the eFolio Minnesota project being done by Darren Cambridge from George Masson University. A copy of the preliminary research results will be forwarded along with this application. Beyond the formal research, this project has saved the education community 100's of thousands of dollars by providing a portfolio tool for students that is available at no charge. Licensing and deploying portfolio infrastructures to service institutions can be costly (estimates for some products could run as high as $50,000/year per institution) with eFolio Minnesota those costs can be folded back into instruction.

Depending on your definition of "con", a con with the eFolio Minnesota might be that since the effort is not top down there are certain operational questions (e.g Such as how many students at Century College are using eFolio Minnesota?) that we are unable to answer at this time. One advantage of taking this approach however is that eFolio Minnesota has been able to avoid a data practices trap that comes from enforcing certain data collection procedures.

24. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Since its launch in August of 2002, eFolio Minnesota has grown not only in the number of users but also in the functionality it provides and in the number of organizations that

have now adopted eFolio Minnesota to complement their efforts.   For example, users now have the ability to spell check their work, to review site statistics and audit logs, to track changes to their site, to purchase additional storage space, etc. In the near future, we will be adding functionality that supports an interview-build interface (similar to TurboTax^{TM}) along with a variety of questionnaire tools. We are also moving forward with plans to include IMS compliant datasets (see www.imsglobal.org for more information, IMS is setting standards that will permit portfolio products to "talk" with one another). There are an increasing number of organizations that have adopted eFolio as part of their work efforts. These organizations include:

-   Department. of Employment and Economic Development which is using eFolio Minnesota within their workforce center system and has provided over $300,000 of additional investment for eFolio Minnesota enhancements.
-   Department. of Education which is getting ready to use eFolio Minnesota as part of their paraprofessional and assistive technology licensing activities, special education transition efforts and within some of their Perkins funded efforts. The Department has provided over $100,000 to support these efforts.
-   Department of Labor's Career OneStop Service Center has provided help desk services for eFolio Minnesota for over two years at NO charge. In addition they have train 100's of individuals around the state again at no charge to eFolio Minnesota.
-   The Minnesota Board of Teaching is exploring how eFolio Minnesota can support various licensing efforts.
-   Various K-12 school districts around the state have included eFolio Minnesota within their instructional offerings.
-   Higher education institutions, both Minnesota State Colleges and Universities campuses and other public and non-public higher education entities are using eFolio Minnesota. In fact, some competing schools like Hamline University and the University of Minnesota's College of Education require their students to complete an eFolio; if your competitors are adopting and promoting your effort then you know you have achieved a level of success.

An interesting exercise is to "Google" eFolio Minnesota and walk through not only the local references to the project but references around the globe to our local work efforts.

 25. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

Beyond budget, there is a need to establish a coalition of willing organizations that are committed to developing and deploying tools that support individual users. Often organizations are trapped into focusing on their consumers as belong to "them". To do this project correctly the focus of the effort must be on the individual.

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