



Report Responding to Requirements of Legislation: Student and Employer Connection Information System

Executive Summary

The RealTime Talent Exchange was recently introduced to Minnesota to bring greater efficiencies to the labor market. Following an extensive evaluation of online labor exchanges, RealTime Talent selected the Exchange, which is powered by WorkFountain, as a technology solution that uses correlated occupation-specific questionnaires to match jobs with potential candidates.

The traditional process of finding the right mix of talent, experience, education and motivation for a job remains a cumbersome, expensive and time consuming task for employers. The Exchange revolutionizes this process by bringing tremendous efficiency in matching job seeker skills and interests to employment opportunities and helping employers better align hiring to their talent needs. Additionally, small and mid-sized businesses who often struggle to attract talent to positions, benefit from technology that informs job seekers of their optimal fit for positions. Candidates who are notified that their talents and preferences are well matched to these companies are likely to explore opportunities further. Job candidates benefit from a system that provides them with immediate feedback on their “match” to jobs. The system of blind-matching is designed to reduce bias due to race, age, gender, and educational background – all assumptions often revealed through resume details that have proven unrelated to job success. The Exchange will provide robust, real-time data and metrics to help Minnesota ensure progress in aligning our labor force to the needs of employers.

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Introduction

RealTime Talent (RTT) is a public-private collaborative with a goal of increasing workforce alignment in Minnesota. Founded by the Itasca Project Workforce Alignment initiative, RTT is a hub for innovation, introducing tools, research, and best practices to address the skills gap and support our higher education and workforce systems as they become increasingly labor market oriented and data-driven.

RTT is led by board members representing employers and public and private service providers, all engaged in workforce development, economic development and/or education, including all sectors of higher education (Minnesota State, University of Minnesota, Minnesota Private College Council and the Minnesota Career College Association). Employer representatives include major Minnesota high wage and high growth industries and those recognizing the significant impacts of looming labor shortages and workforce misalignment, including:

- AgriGrowth Council
- Financial Services Collaborative
- Medical Alley
- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Minnesota High Tech Association
- Minnesota Precision Manufacturing Association
- Society of Human Resources Managers
- Itasca Project

Skill gaps and workforce shortages threaten economic growth in Minnesota. At the same time, many people in our state face limited work opportunities and are isolated from the economic prosperity of recent years.

The Saint Paul Foundation serves as the fiscal agent for RTT and provides our nonprofit (501.c3) status. Additionally, the Saint Paul Foundation provides fiscal management and oversight as the designated recipient of legislative funds and is our contract agent with Minnesota Office of Higher Education. To review a list of RTT board members and affiliations, click [here](#).

RTT impacts the work of more than 1,000 partners and stakeholders across Minnesota who are engaging with the tools and research we provide. RTT continues to expand its network of organizations and professionals that provide services to employers, job seekers, workforce planners and students.

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In 2015, RTT purchased access to the web-based real-time data tool TalentNeuron Recruit (formerly Wanted Analytics). This tool provides up-to-the-minute labor market information from job postings, including information on currently available job openings, hard and soft job skills, certifications, and in-demand education and experience. The information can be filtered by occupation, function, employer, experience, location, and more. The data serves as a critical aid in helping make sound decisions about the design of academic programs and customized training, informing discussions with employers and economic development partners, and advising students and job seekers on career choices and job searches. RTT provides support and training to users of the tool across Minnesota.

Findings and Labor Market Misalignment

In RTT's first year of extensive research using a real-time aggregator tool, observations of trends and practices emerged that were likely negatively impacting the ability of employers to find candidates, and the ability of candidates to recognize and respond to employment opportunities. Samplings of these inefficiencies include:

- Errors, such as misspelling of company names, in job postings
- Out of date or overly generic postings
- Requirements inflation
- Proliferation of regional or specialized job banks with no connectivity
- Potential undercounting of "evergreen" postings and positions filled through graduate recruiting, staffing services, etc.
- Misinformation regarding job locations

There is a clear need to be responsive to local employers and job seekers. For example, some regions of the state and industries use Craigslist for a surprisingly high portion of job postings. Craigslist is not a value-added recruiting tool; in addition there is a potential undercounting of jobs and labor market demand in regions with high proportion of Craigslist postings or use of traditional (non-web) posting methods, such as signs, local paper, etc. Perhaps most concerning is the lack of measures to support state or regional benchmarks to demonstrate progress on workforce development and alignment issues, such as job fill-rates and time-to-fill information.

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As a small and nimble organization, RTT is well positioned to support the intent of the 2016 legislature by identifying and engaging a technology solution that would impact some, if not all, of the above inefficiencies and could be used proactively to support career development, planning and placement for Minnesota's youth, dual training participants, students, and job and internship seekers.

RTT has been engaged with the work of the pipeline project and career pathways work through Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Greater Twin Cities United Way and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. RealTime Talent has sought additional avenues for engagement with Minnesota's secondary schools, which are a key provider of early information regarding career readiness, planning, and opportunities, as well as a means of supporting work based learning.

Selecting WorkFountain

RealTime Talent recognized the following goals in selection of an online tool with matching technology:

1. A tool readily adapted to meet the needs of regional and industry specific job boards, including reducing the cost burden on local organizations and providing connections to avoid employers having to manage multiple postings.
2. A means of collecting real-time data on employment demand that reflected specific job characteristics and skill needs of employers, including access to data for specific geographic regions and statewide.
3. An affordable and sustainable technology with an easy-to-use interface for employers of all sizes, in all industries, across Minnesota.
4. An interactive mechanism designed to bring significant efficiencies to the recruitment and hiring process, while maintaining employer compliance with federal and state regulations.

RTT identified 25 web-based labor exchange platforms to evaluate prior to selecting a tool that would best meet legislative goals and the needs of Minnesota employers and residents. The study was further focused on tools providing advanced matching capabilities, narrowing the evaluation to 11 online labor exchange platforms (phase I), with eight agreeing to participate in a full interview and rubric-based evaluation (phase 2). The evaluation included functional testing of each live site, responses to a series of

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questions and a guided demonstration of the site from the perspective of a job seeker and an employer. The evaluation scored labor exchange candidates on the ability of each to provide or ease the burden of legal compliance, branding, interface customization, innovation, data access and cost. Each company was also specifically asked if their tools and services could meet the needs of the legislative funding requirements and RTT's objectives. Three companies expressed specific interest. Of the three, two were the highest scoring platforms based on the guidelines and rubrics. These included Monster.com and WorkFountain. Each provided references, which RTT contacted. Cost and implementation timeframes were reviewed in the final stages of the study.

At the end of this process, RTT selected WorkFountain as our exchange platform. For a complete summary report of the evaluation study, click [here](#).

WorkFountain is a division of Digerati, a process engineering firm that leverages engineering and creativity to solve complex problems for businesses and communities. Founded in 2001, Digerati creates comprehensive technology solutions for its clients and works to galvanize economic development in the United States through innovative solutions.

WorkFountain is a proven web-based talent matching tool that addresses the unique recruiting needs of small to large employers. The concept is

simple: WorkFountain guides employers through an easy posting process that includes an occupation specific questionnaire. (WorkFountain contains 1,400 specific occupations and 100,000 job characteristics.) Complex patent-pending algorithms sort through tens of thousands of job seeker profiles to quickly provide employers with the highest ranking candidates based on their specific hiring needs. Unlike traditional online job boards which effectively serve as electronic "classified ads," WorkFountain is a dynamic matching system that

History of WorkFountain In 2007 Digerati was approached by a cross-sector group including employer representatives, higher education and philanthropy to design a solution that would address a pervasive issue within Michigan. High percentages of new graduates were leaving the state for employment after college. Meanwhile, a top concern of Michigan employers was their inability to find talent to meet the needs of their positions. As a process engineering firm, Digerati explored the project from different angles, and proposed an innovative solution. The system was so successful it was replicated in Ohio. More recently, the tool has been redeveloped to support both internship and job matching. Often described as "eHarmony meets Monster.com," WorkFountain's early success includes more than 10,000 employers and 100,000 candidates. In addition to Michigan, Ohio and Minnesota, WorkFountain was selected to implement the platform in the Chicagoland region and across the state of Texas.

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connects job seekers and employers based solely on skills, interests and requirements. All jobs posted on the WorkFountain network will automatically be distributed to up to 5,000 job boards across the country. The responsiveness of the system, providing both employers and job seekers with immediate and continued feedback, in many ways uses technology to “humanize” the job search.

Bringing WorkFountain to Minnesota as the Exchange

RTT finalized a one-year contract with the Office of Higher Education in August of 2016, to be renewed for the following fiscal year by May 31, 2017. RTT staff immediately began negotiations with Digerati and WorkFountain to support a comprehensive regional partnership with Minnesota. We developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reflecting the collaborative nature of our agreement, rather than a vendor and purchaser agreement. The MOU outlines a two-year payment structure to Digerati/WorkFountain, shared marketing structure, access to statewide data, revenue sharing and recommended distribution channels. Distribution channels through RTT include outreach to education providers, local and regional economic developers, industry specific organizations and other employer representatives such as Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, with the goal of engaging hosts and collaborators across Minnesota to create a

Naming the Exchange

Following web-based research, RTT forwarded two potential names to board members and strategic partners. Our focus was to have a name tied to the workforce alignment initiatives of RealTime Talent, but distinct from other job boards and labor exchanges or initiatives operating in the state. Following a simple survey, ***RealTime Talent Exchange*** (commonly referenced as the Exchange) was selected. Local hosts will select their own branding of the tool and will state its collaboration with RealTime Talent Exchange.

network of local, customized job boards. These boards will be powered by WorkFountain and tied to a RTT hosted labor exchange. The MOU was finalized the last week of September 2016. RTT and WorkFountain then began building the system for implementation in Minnesota. A website and local portal was operational by mid-October and we began outreach to potential users and hosts in late October with our first information events on November 2, 2016.

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Implementation of the Exchange

Implementation strategies include a prelaunch phase with outreach to industry, colleges and universities, workforce service providers and others with access to employers and job or internship seekers. Prelaunch is defined as a timeframe during which individuals and employers are introduced to the Exchange and have an opportunity to be early adopters. The prelaunch phase is November 1, 2016 to February 15, 2017, followed by a February 15 to April 1, 2017 launch phase. Incentives, in the form of posting coupons, will be provided to early adopters during the prelaunch period.

The prelaunch strategy relies on establishing a network of hosts, organizations that identify a value in bringing the Exchange to their employer or workforce community. Additionally, RTT has been promoting the Exchange on its website, available [here](#). RTT will use its current twitter feed and LinkedIn group to promote the Exchange and early positions posted on the Exchange.

Goals identified for the prelaunch period include:

- Prepare marketing materials by January 15 for four audience groups: employers, career services professionals, job and intern seekers, and hosts.
- Launch five host organizations by February 15.
- Support 10 active employers posting on-site by March 1.
- Engage 10 providers to promote the Exchange to job seekers (those who work with students and job seekers, including colleges and universities, workforce centers, community based service providers, private career services providers and others) by March 1.

RTT currently has commitments from one of Minnesota's premier businesses with headquarters in Minnesota and we have scheduled Exchange demonstrations with several other Minnesota businesses. We have host commitments from one provider, one economic development organization, and a key Minnesota industry association. Additional host discussions are underway with several organizations with both regional and statewide focus. Higher education outreach is also underway.

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To accommodate Minnesota's extensive work with academic pathways and high school internships, WorkFountain is adapting their system to support high school students. This technology change will be completed by February 1, 2017. Outreach to Minnesota's secondary schools will begin in earnest at that time. The change will allow students ages 16 and up to apply for jobs and internships, as well as provide high school counselors with access to the career services portal.

WorkFountain is adding a certification component to the system. Individuals completing industry-based and noncredit certificates will have the opportunity to document completion within the system starting in the first quarter of 2017.

Key partnerships established during the prelaunch include expanding our collaboration with the Minnesota Pipeline Project and Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry apprenticeships. On January 10, 2017, RTT hosted the first of a series of webinars for MN DOLI employers in technology and manufacturing. Additional webinars will be provided for healthcare, agriculture, and other industries. Additionally, at the November 28 RTT board meeting, RealTime Talent board members made a commitment to be early adopters and advocates. Board members are reaching out to their networks to promote the Exchange and create opportunities for additional presentations/ demonstrations of the tool. RTT and WorkFountain staff have also met with the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to identify specific tracking goals the system may accommodate and opportunities for OHE to recommend higher education institutions use the Exchange to support data compliance.

Additional staffing during the prelaunch phase includes WorkFountain/Digerati hiring an enterprise sales professional beginning December 10, 2016. This individual's role is complementary to the work of RTT and will focus on corporate and staffing firm engagement with the tool. Beginning January 4, 2017, WorkFountain/Digerati hired a project manager to provide direct support for implementation. An official launch of the Exchange will occur between February 15 and March 15, 2017. The launch will include a public event and formal recognition of early adopters. The launch will be followed by an intense outreach effort to expand the host network and use of the Exchange. RTT and WorkFountain/Digerati have a formal goal of 10,000 annual job postings and 100,000 job/intern seekers by June 2018.

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Financial Obligations

RTT has a two-year financial commitment to Digerati to purchase the WorkFountain technology and support the customizations required by the state of Minnesota. This purchase ensures all hosts in Minnesota will have access to a custom portal at no additional cost. Minnesota employers will purchase postings within the system for \$39 for jobs and \$19 for internships. Additionally, Exchange hosts can participate in a revenue sharing agreement that provides \$5 per job posting and \$2.50 per internship posting through the host portal. RTT recommends these revenues be used to support workforce alignment. Suggestions include rebates or promotion codes for the Exchange to local employers, system outreach and technology integration, or additional related activities such as collaboration with local education and training providers. RTT and WorkFountain are in the final stages of developing a step by step Host Packet that includes Iframe connectivity, sample emails, promotional materials for members or community, etc. For a copy of this packet, contact Jess Niebuhr (jess@realtimentalentmn.org).

Appendix I – Copy of Legislative Language

Appendix II– DRAFT Sample Marketing to Hosts

Appendix I – Copy of Legislative Language

Minnesota Legislature under R3, Article 1, Senate language (UEH2749-1) in May 2016.

Subd. 5. Student and Employer Connection \$500,000

4.7 Information System

4.8 For a grant to the Saint Paul Foundation

4.9 for the creation of a web-based job and

4.10 intern-seeking software tool that blind

4.11 matches the needs of employers located

4.12 in Minnesota with the individual profiles

4.13 of high school seniors and postsecondary

4.14 students attending Minnesota high schools

4.15 and postsecondary institutions. No more

4.16 than three percent of this appropriation may

4.17 be used for administrative expenses of the

4.18 foundation. The foundation must report by

4.19 January 15, 2017, on activities under this

4.20 subdivision to the chairs and ranking minority

4.21 members of the legislative committees with

4.22 jurisdiction over higher education finance.

4.23 The base for this appropriation is \$405,000

4.24 in fiscal year 2018.

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Appendix II– DRAFT Sample Marketing to Hosts

RealTime Talent EXCHANGE HOST

CONNECT
MINNESOTA EMPLOYERS AND
CANDIDATES – FASTER.

www.realtimetalent.org/exchange

(Not true to size. For a printable copy, contact Jess@realtimetalentmn.org)

RealTime Talent EXCHANGE

Every day, you work to provide value to your community. And now, there's an opportunity for that value to be even richer. With the RealTime Talent Exchange, a job and internship matching platform powered by WorkFountain, you can connect local employers and ideal job candidates—efficiently and effectively.

Focused on developing and retaining the workforce in Minnesota, people can use the Exchange through a portal hosted on your organization's website. Easy to launch, it will be customized, complete with a look and feel that's true to your organization. From there, local employers can log in to post jobs, while job seekers can easily apply for opportunities. All users will experience the state-of-the-art method that's proven to match the right candidate to the right employer.

Give your community the tools to make meaningful connections and find compatible talent. To get started, request a live demonstration today.

JESS NIEBUHR
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THE MATCH

When candidates apply to work in your community, they'll answer occupation-specific questions driven by more than 100,000 unique job characteristics and backed by extensive research. Their application will be scored, screened and stack ranked, so employers in your area can find the best person for the job, faster than ever before.

In addition, because of its innovative and data-driven technology, this tool makes hiring decisions easier and more objective.

The Exchange is a quick and easy-to-use resource that matches opportunities to people with the right skills, knowledge and preferences.

THE DETAILS

When you enroll in the Exchange, your organization will have access to:

- A tool that helps employers address workforce shortages, minimize turnover, and drives efficient recruitment
- A branded portal
- Revenue share options
- Aggregated data to support local, industry and workforce investments, including:
 - Applicants' demographics and contact information
 - Workforce trends and employer demand

(Not true to size. For a printable copy, contact Jess@realtimetalentmn.org)

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