

Career eFolio Minnesota

Project Report

February 11, 2009

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Project Overview

In reference to the adage, “What a difference a day makes,” Northeast Minnesota has, over the course of a year, certainly experienced fallout from the significant downward spiral of the national economy. While the region holds on to the hope that it will rise above and experience some of the growth and expansion in business and industry as anticipated, it is suffering temporary shutdowns, layoffs and drops in retirement rates as those who have contemplated retirement are having to delay their plans. In response to the national economy and detrimental effects and looming threats on stable employment, Career eFolio Minnesota’s mission, goals and commitment to enhance workforce initiatives and advance economic development are more essential than ever. Career eFolio Minnesota, piloting in Northeast Minnesota and hosted by Mesabi Range Community & Technical College, has certainly taken root, made tremendous progress over the course of its first year, and continues to serve its mission and goals. Within its scope, the project has also stepped up its efforts in response to the current state of the economy in order to meet the needs and demands of the area’s workforce, including the unemployed and those who now must retrain for jobs needed to supplement their retirement.

Project Mission and Goals

Funded under a Minnesota Legislature provision in 2007, the Career eFolio Minnesota project was established to advance economic development and contribute to meeting the area’s workforce needs and objectives. Building on Minnesota’s statewide eFolio electronic portfolio system, Career eFolio Minnesota’s overall mission is to develop an enterprise economic development system with the following economic and workforce development goals in mind:

- Build partnerships with existing and new area businesses and industries to use eFolio technology as a means to:
 - Readily identify and recruit potential employees with specific skills, qualifications and credentials
 - Provide their human resources with a considerable savings in cost, time, energy and efficiency in hiring new employees
 - Manage their own employee skill sets, certifications and career development
 - Generate company information, post job openings and search for employees
- Equip economic development officials with a tool to mine and showcase valuable workforce demographic data (otherwise difficult to attain) to:
 - Entice prospective employers and companies considering location, relocation, or expansion in Minnesota

- Address issues of underemployment and connect employed workers with jobs that more accurately reflect their skills, abilities and interests
- Link those who wish to move back to or move to the region with jobs that will enable them to do so
- Advance career planning and career development initiatives through bridging education, skills and training with regional workforce needs and jobs
- Provide evidence and garner support for other local, state and national economic development initiatives
- Promote widespread eFolio technology use among the regional population to:
 - Connect job-seekers with potential employers and employment opportunities
 - Contribute individual data to eFolio to develop a data collection resource for extracting valuable demographic information
 - Provide a means for all individuals to showcase their best qualities, skills, training, education and experience including those that would be difficult to discern from traditional resume and job application materials
 - Retain the next generation workforce and engage high school and college students in career planning and preparation for current and future job opportunities in Northeast Minnesota

Project Implementation and Advancement

Staffing: At the start of the Career eFolio Minnesota project, three full-time staff members (a Program Manager, Program Coordinator, and Program Specialist) were originally hired to carry out its work. Recognizing the existence of a digital divide, Career eFolio Minnesota wrote and secured an AmeriCorps VISTA grant providing a full-time employee for three years in an effort to focus on identifying and overcoming the economic and technological barriers affecting populations and individuals and their ability to participate in eFolio initiatives. Added in July 2008, the eFolio AmeriCorps VISTA component has improved and continues to impact the eFolio project's capacity to reach targeted underserved and underprivileged populations. Career eFolio also has had one temporary part-time staff member that will soon be replaced with a full-time permanent employee with supporting funds awarded through an American Association of Community Colleges grant. Two work study students also contribute to the overall project operations.

Funding: Without additional supplemental funding, the Career eFolio Minnesota Program will only be able to *temporarily* maintain its ability to operate as a system, given the annual \$225,000 base appropriation. As operating costs, personnel, travel, and technology and equipment upgrade costs continue to increase, additional funding will be needed. The project has been awarded a non-monetary grant for a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA worker for three years, for whom the project must contribute \$10,500 annually to cover fringe benefits costs. While the initial \$200,000 Iron Range Resources grant covering start-up costs and subsidizing the much needed eFolio technology upgrade expired in December 2008, the project is thrilled about achieving a 2-year supplemental innovation grant for \$100,000 from the American Association of Community Colleges to add another staff member, provide

technical assistance in bridging our community partners, and develop new products that will further increase eFolio use and development. Career eFolio Minnesota is gaining recognition as it leads, not only the region, but the world in using electronic portfolios and corresponding technologies to guide career development and impact workforce and economic progress. Without a doubt, the eFolio Program will strive to keep its leading role and must continue to seek additional and supplemental funding as opportunities for expansion and the needs and demands of the project will continue to grow.

Outreach: While accounting for all individuals who have engaged in eFolio as a result of our marketing and extension efforts is difficult, Career eFolio Minnesota has done numerous first-hand presentations and trainings to a current count of **3,412 individuals** including students, workforce agency and economic development center staff, community members, job-seekers, human resource managers, and education faculty, staff and administrators.

One of the most challenging yet beneficial goals in the Career eFolio Minnesota project is to use eFolio technology and program initiatives to build new and strengthen existing partnerships between postsecondary and K-12 education systems, business and industry representatives, and workforce and economic development agencies. As a cutting-edge tool, eFolio has tremendous capacity for serving a wide array of planning purposes whether it is on an individual student, job-seeker, institutional, entrepreneurial, organizational, or business level. As such, Career eFolio Minnesota has already formed partnerships with community organizations and agencies including the Northeast MN Office of Job Training, Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, Laurentian Chamber of Commerce, Our Gang Staffing, Iron Range Resources, Northeast Higher Education District colleges, and five local school districts.

The eFolio Program has also been connecting with employers through the Arrowhead Human Resource Association, comprised of HR Managers representing nearly all of the region's employers. Eight Human Resource Managers (including Minnesota Power, Polymet, and Iron Range Resources) have attended further training to explore the use of eFolio in their hiring and employee management practices. Furthermore, Iron Range Resources has volunteered to be the first to fully integrate eFolio, requiring all job applicants to submit an eFolio in order to be considered for employment and all current IRR employees to create an eFolio to be used by the organization as a means to nurture professional development and promote their employees.

Project Objectives, Achievements and Outcomes

The Career eFolio Minnesota Project has six primary objectives. Listed below are the objectives with accompanying achievements and outcomes accomplished since the last report submitted May 2008:

Objective 1: Advance Area Workforce Development Initiatives

- Continued to provide informational sessions and training to MN Workforce Center and Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency staff and clientele.
- Formed a collaborative partnership with several career-focused programs of the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency to integrate eFolio use into curriculum.

- Built a relationship with Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) staff to work to integrate eFolio into MN Job Bank employment services.
- Organized on-site monthly eFolio trainings through 2009 at the MN Workforce Centers in Virginia and Hibbing.
- Secured \$100,000 in grant funding to create and develop a comprehensive job-seeker career planning website to increase use and proper development of career-focused eFolio development.
- Developed guides and handouts on how to create effective eFolios for employment purposes.
- Secured grant funding for two eFolio staff and two regional workforce agency professionals to travel to California and participate in the Workforce Development Institute to learn more about labor market data, trends and issues as well as network with National leaders in workforce development and policymaking.

Objective 2: Contribute to Regional Economic Development

- Continued to include regional economic development agency representation in quarterly eFolio Steering Committee meetings.
- Researched common desired employee qualifications and skill sets and created a rough draft of a questionnaire to embed in eFolio and use to database workforce skills and connect job-seekers with potential employers.
- Developed strategic plans on how to target all current and upcoming workforce populations in order to collect and compile substantial workforce data.
- Initiated eFolio involvement in entrepreneurship efforts including the use of eFolio to structure and monitor entrepreneurial incubator planning, mentoring and progression.

Objective 3: Promote Business and Industrial Growth and Development in NE Minnesota

- Conducted an informational session at the state-wide eFolio Summit 2008 to attending educators and workforce professionals to illustrate the power of and potential uses for eFolios in human resource and workforce development sectors.
- Presented information on eFolio to over 30 human resource professionals attending the July 2008 quarterly Arrowhead Human Resource Association (AHRA) meeting.
- Participated in the 2008 AHRA Annual Conference and hosted an informational booth to expose HR professionals to eFolio, solicit employer participation in eFolio business and industry leadership roles, and initiate communication and online eFolio newsletter subscriptions.
- Provided eFolio workshops for the West Range area WELD initiative, providing trainings and sessions for employers to share ideas and best practices with each other.
- Held a luncheon seminar for area businesses to illustrate uses of eFolio for hiring and employee development purposes, generate interest in future workshops, and initiate pilot eFolio projects with business and industry partners.
- Launched <http://CareereFolioMinnesota.com> website to promote eFolio initiatives and events, share news stories and best practices, and bridge communication between business and industry partners, community organizations, educational institutions, students and job-seekers.

Objective 4: Promote eFolio Technology Use in Education

- Continued to include secondary and higher education representation in quarterly eFolio Steering Committee meetings.
- Organized and participated in an informational session for eFolio staff on implementing GPS LifePlan, a career and life planning tool for college students.
- Secured \$100,000 grant to create, develop and implement a secondary school version of GPS LifePlan to coordinate career and life planning and eFolio development.
- Organized and facilitated an eFolio Student Showcase project to assist college students representing various majors and training programs and high school students representing various school districts with creating exceptional individual eFolios to be used as examples in promoting eFolio and for recruiting purposes.
- Provided eFolio informational and training sessions to all college students at two NHED District colleges and for students in a wide array of career programs and courses at two of the remaining three NHED District colleges.
- Structured (and continuing to develop) an institutional eFolio model for Mesabi Range's 2009 Self-Study and seeking Higher Learning Commission approval under the PEAQ accreditation model to serve as a template for other institutions to follow.
- Started discussions on using eFolios for college assessment of general education requirements.
- Created and provided tutorials and tools to area secondary and postsecondary students and programs to integrate eFolio use.
- Created a faculty/educator eFolio template for showcasing credentials and professional work samples for Awards for Excellence activities.
- Provided eFolio training and support to high school career and college preparation programs including the Applied Learning Initiative (ALI), Academic Journey project and Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math/Science TRIO Programs.
- Held open student labs to introduce eFolio to new users and support current users.

Objective 5: Promote eFolio Technology Use in Unaddressed Populations

- Continued to research, identify and form partnerships with programs and organizations serving populations age 50 and over to reach target population such as Elder Services Network, AEOA, and Retired Senior Volunteer Program.
- Continued discussions with Continuing Education/Customized Training to integrate eFolio into training sessions offered for populations age 50 and over who are looking to reenter the workforce after first retirement.
- Secured grant funding to create an accessible informational job-seeker version of GPS LifePlan that would also include community resources, organizations and activities to assist individuals who lack the technological or educational skills needed to manipulate eFolio technology and develop content within their individual eFolios.
- Secured an AmeriCorps VISTA grant, recruited a VISTA volunteer and aligned duties to address the needs of the target population.

- Contributed to the establishment of an eFolio Café where community members can access the Internet, eFolio and corresponding web-based tools free-of-charge.
- Provided eFolio training to programs serving low income, first-generation college and college-bound students to improve their career and education planning processes and expose them to web-based tools and technology.

Objective 6: Establish and Advance the eFolio Project

- Secured a 2-year \$100,000 grant from the American Association of Community Colleges to create and develop new web-based resources and marketing materials that support increased participation and stronger eFolio development for high school students and general job-seekers. The grant also includes significant funding for technical assistance in building strong partnerships with community members, agencies and institutions.
- Acquired additional personnel including a part-time staff member, a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, and two work study students to promote eFolio's mission and goals.
- Continued to provide staff development, training, and networking opportunities on electronic portfolio pedagogy, research, and software applications.
- Secured grant funding and professional development funds to attend an international ePortfolio Conference in Maastricht, Netherlands, to network with and learn from world leaders in electronic portfolio research, applications, and best practices.
- Developed additional tools and methods to evaluate new user trainings and experiences.
- Continued to conduct quarterly eFolio Steering Committee meetings with representation from MnSCU, workforce development, business and industry, economic development, secondary and higher education, and regional leadership.
- Secured a grant-funded AmeriCorps VISTA position and submitted a continuation grant proposal to increase eFolio outreach efforts to special populations and support the mission and goals of the initiative.
- Created a marketing plan and campaign to address a variety of potential constituents.
- Designed marketing materials to provide information on and promote the use of eFolio.
- Identified potential supplementary funding sources which aligned with the goals of the initiative and actively pursued financial support.
- Explored (and continuing to explore) additional opportunities and uses for eFolio in an effort to increase awareness and individual use of eFolios.

Project Biennial Budget Appropriation

As stated in the May 2008 Project Report, Career eFolio Minnesota operates under a budget strategically, responsibly and reasonably allocated to meet the needs, goals and objectives of the project. In year one, initial startup costs were incurred to organize and equip functional office spaces as well as an adjoining training center where community members and students can gather to learn about, receive assistance and develop individual portfolios and community leaders, developers, businesses and organizations can meet to strategize eFolio uses and implementation. Launching the eFolio project and

promoting region-wide use of eFolio technology among the entire area population requires significant marketing strategies and considerable budget allocations necessary to support them.

Because the eFolio project is technology-based, provisions for staff training, sophisticated software and high-tech equipment are needed to provide quality technical assistance and conduct effective presentations, trainings and workshops. Staff travel is also a vital expense as learning about eFolio technology and electronic portfolio best practices and uses around the world provide staff with the knowledge, skills and relationships with renowned experts and practitioners that will support them in their innovative project mission.

The Career eFolio Minnesota Program has been fortunate to receive additional grant funding for start-up costs, technology upgrades, international travel, development of new products, and addition of new services that promote the overall mission and goals of the project. In due time, and without supplemental grant funding, a level-funded Legislative base appropriation for the project will only cover salaries and additional funding will be needed to sustain the basic functions, technologies and activities necessary to operate a successful project. In the meantime, Career eFolio Minnesota will continue to be good stewards of our legislative dollars and will also pursue other sources of funding in an effort to increase the project's capacity to add new dimensions and provide additional tools and services that support the project's mission.

The following budget appropriates base funding over the 2007-09 biennial period:

Budget Item	Budget Amount	Budget Balance
TOTAL BIENNIAL BUDGET		\$450,000.00
Personnel		
Project Manager: 1 @ 100% for 18 months		
Project Coordinator: 1 @ 100% for 17 months		
Project Specialist: 1 @ 100% for 14 months		
AmeriCorps VISTA: 1 @100% for 12 months		
Total Personnel		
Full-time Fringe (32%):		
State Retirement (8.5%) + Social Security (7.5%) + Health and Life Insurance (16%)		
Fringe Contribution to AmeriCorps VISTA position		
Total Fringe		
Total Personnel & Fringe	\$292,653.00	157347
Office Equipment		
4 monitors, 4 laptops, 4 docking stations, all-in-one printer, scanner		
Laserjet Printer and ink cartridges		
Total Office Equipment	\$17,152.00	140195
Office Furniture		

Desks, storage for 4 eFolio staff work space and storage areas				
Workspace furniture for eFolio Foyer Training area				
Total Office Furniture			\$25,152.00	115043
Office Supplies				
Reference books, computer software, general office supplies				
Total Office Supplies			\$4,892.00	110151
Staff Training Fees				
MnSCU Supervisory Training, LaGuardia College "Making Connections" Conference, eFolio Summit 2008 Conference, Computer Skills Training, National Conference, International Conference				
Total Staff Training			\$6,853.00	103298
Staff Travel				
Staff Training Travel (lodging, meals, airfare, transportation)				
Mileage Reimbursement for regional and state eFolio staff travel				
Total Staff Travel			\$29,929.00	73369
Training Equipment & Supplies				
Wireless Router, 16 laptop computers, laptop recharging storage cart, LCD projector and screen, digital camera, wireless scanners, wireless printer, computer accessories, training supplies				
Total Training Equipment & Supplies			\$41,845.00	31524
Communication				
4 Cell Phones (activation, monthly charges) and accessories				
Total Communication Costs			\$2,604.00	28920
Marketing				
Radio, Television and Newspaper eFolio Project Advertising, employment advertising, professional printing and design services, promotional materials				
Total Marketing			\$27,990.00	930
Professional Memberships/Affiliations				
EDUCAUSE Institnl. Mmbershp				
Total Mmbship/Affiliation Costs			\$930.00	0
Total Project Costs				450000

Project Future

Career eFolio Minnesota's future is promising! In just a year's time, the number of students, organizations and professionals having an understanding of and an interest in using eFolio has grown substantially. New technology that requires time, training and in many cases, a change in processes can be difficult to introduce and implement, especially with those who are slow to accept progressive technology and resistant to change. However, Career eFolio Minnesota's complex interdependent strategies are clearly working as all targeted entities in eFolio's scope are finding value in eFolio, adopting the technology and adapting it to serve their unique situations and needs. With such significant progress in their first year in operation, Career eFolio Minnesota is anxious to see how much it can accomplish in year two!

Career eFolio Minnesota's future is emerging! While there has been a delay in its intended October 2008 launch, eFolio Minnesota's software platform will undergo a substantial multi-million dollar upgrade that will have significant impact on the results and success of the Career eFolio Minnesota project. Businesses and agencies are anxiously awaiting the capabilities the upgrade will provide in connecting them with pools of skilled, trained and educated workers through eFolio and the richer and more in-depth picture they will have of those seeking employment. Businesses, organizations and institutions are also anticipating the opportunity to use eFolio to better understand the goals, skills and needs of their internal employees and how they can better support, mentor, develop and retain them.

Career eFolio Minnesota's future is incredible! Career eFolio Minnesota's Program Manager was fortunate to be able to attend the European Institute for e-Learning (EIFEL) ePortfolio Conference in Maastricht, Netherlands in October 2008. One of the main conference threads focused on building a regional European ePortfolio system similar to Minnesota in order to better organize workforce strategies and identify labor market skills. In fact, Minnesota's state-wide eFolio system was marveled and mentioned in nearly every breakout session. While there is speculation on whether they will meet their deadline, Europe is striving for ePortfolios for all of their citizens by the year 2010. Attending the ePortfolio conference verified that, without a doubt, Career eFolio Minnesota is on to something very significant and while we are forging new territories in our region, we are also leading the world.