

NASCIO Recognition Awards 2003

WiscJobs

Title of Nomination: WiscJobs
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Executive Summary:

In the late 1990's through early 2000, the State of Wisconsin struggled to compete in a tight labor market. The state's hiring process took longer than private employers, and the process was frequently paper intensive and inaccessible. (Job seekers were required to purchase a paid subscription to receive a current listing of open positions in civil service.) The Department of Employment Relations, along with the Department of Administration, agreed to pool resources in order to build a web-based application that would allow applicants to browse job listings, apply for jobs, and take exams online for those positions. This modest project was the genesis of what was to become WiscJobs, a comprehensive online state job recruitment tool with separate interfaces for job seekers in the general public and for state human resources personnel.

The first phase of the project, from March of 2001 to February of 2002, moved the subscription service, then known as the Current Opportunities Bulletin, online. More than just a static listing of job openings, the new online system included the HR interface necessary to manage applicants, post new job listings, and laid the groundwork for later phases. As we completed that phase, changing market conditions prompted the first change request, to build an Employee Referral System that would give employees who were laid off or at risk of lay off first access to open positions with the State, allowing them to pursue a transfer instead of being laid off. This change request was approved, the work was completed in January of 2002, and we returned to our original plan of creating online exams.

A month into that schedule, we turned our attention to another change request. This request involved moving an application called the Statewide Human Resource System (SHRS) online. This system, which ran in a mainframe environment, provided some of the key behind-the-scenes human resource functions. The expense of running SHRS on a mainframe was significant, and by moving off that platform we expected to save enough to pay for the development effort to move the system, and build the rest of WiscJobs, in four years.

We completed that move in September of '02, and turned to the final phase of our effort, creating exams online. This piece would allow applicants to test for a position and receive their scores online, instead of having to report for a test in person at a regional testing center or job site, and wait weeks for the score to be mailed to them.

Currently, that section of the project is on target for completion in June of '03, which will conclude the WiscJobs project. While the original project was smaller in scope and timeline, the approved scope changes have allowed us to address a larger portion of the needs of the State's hiring managers, and HR professionals.

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Detailed justification of nomination for WiscJobs:

- a) Description of project, including length of time in operation.

WiscJobs was envisioned as a system to give the public better access to state job opportunities, and to allow the HR professionals and hiring managers of the State of Wisconsin to more quickly evaluate and respond to applicants for positions within the State. When the project began the state was having difficulty hiring staff, because the job market was tight and state agencies were unable to make job offers quickly enough to avoid losing well-qualified candidates to other employers. As the project moved forward, the market changed, and we adapted our goals accordingly. We added an internal system to allow state employees who had been laid off, or who were at risk of layoff, to apply for transfer into state job openings before positions announced to the general public. We also moved a back office HR system from a mainframe platform to a web platform to increase its availability to HR, and to lower operational costs. The project was originally planned to run for fourteen months, from March of '01 until April of '02, but subsequent scope changes added time and resources, allowing us to achieve better payback and more functionality.

- b) Significance to the improvement of the operation of government.

The key improvements attained by WiscJobs are in the speed of interaction between job applicants and state hiring managers, and reductions in the costs of human resource operations. We expect to shave weeks off the hiring process by allowing managers to review and respond to applications online instead of waiting for printed forms. By moving the state human resource management system from the mainframe to a PC based environment we expect to save several hundred thousand dollars a year.

- c) Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state.

WiscJobs is intended to benefit primarily the applicants for state positions by making the application process faster and easier. Although state hiring has slowed due to budget restraints and an uncertain economy, we're still concerned with hiring the best staff possible. A speedier and more responsive recruitment system enhances the state's ability to hire the best-qualified applicant for a particular job opening. In addition, we've made the process of hiring more accessible and efficient for management, and increased the effectiveness of the tools at their disposal.

- d) Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations). Projects must exhibit measurable operational benefit

The simple return on investment of this project is that we're saving about \$450k per year in operational costs, and the total outlay, including staff time, will be about \$1.75M to final build out. Based on that, the project will break even in approximately four years, with the increased functionality being a bonus.