Project Name: Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) Certificate for NCTC Employee Development

Project Description: The project included four separate Microsoft Office Suite 2007 computer software application training sessions (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint) offered on both the Thief River Falls campus and the East Grand Forks campus.

Award: $5,000

Project Re-cap:

The focus of the training sessions was to teach Microsoft Office 2007 program applications, measure proficiency, and identify opportunities for enhancement of skills. Employees who wanted to take the certification exams would receive a Microsoft Office Specialist certification credential that is recognized worldwide as proof of having the computing skills needed to work productively and efficiently. The project was to provide timely training and certification for support staff as Northland upgrades to Microsoft Office 2007.

Each session was three hours long and taught by a MOS Master Certified instructor. The sessions covered the core level of each application.

Impact:

Northland upgraded to the Microsoft Office 2007 in September 2008. These training sessions were designed to introduce the new features of the new version of Microsoft Office. The training sessions also brought out awareness of employee overall comprehension of Microsoft Office applications, their ability to use advanced features, and their ability to integrate them with other software applications. Employees were taught new, existing, and advanced features, and other uses for these applications. Employees were given the resources to continue learning through step-by-step written instructions. Employees were also offered practice and certification exams. Approximately 30 employees (IT Staff, administrative support, and other support staff) took advantage of these sessions. Currently we have 10 employees utilizing the practice exams preparing for the certification exams.

Reflections:

These sessions showed NCTC administration that additional training is needed for staff in the new version of Microsoft Office 2007 software applications. The short “overview” sessions were great to evaluate current skills and abilities and to introduce new features, but more in-depth training will be needed to move these employees to the next level of Microsoft Office 2007 software applications.
Project Name: Strength-Based Leadership for NCTC Staff Development

Project Description: Strength-based Leadership
The project provided two separate leadership development training sessions utilizing the Strengths-Based Leadership approach. Each of the sessions accommodated up to twenty employees. The focus of the training sessions was strength-based leadership and teamwork. This initiative was started in fiscal year 2008 and this project continued the staff development effort for additional employees throughout the college.

Award: $5,000

Project Re-cap:

Employees who had attended the FY2008 StrengthsFinder training sessions (Level One) were provided the next level of training, and new employees were given the opportunity to participate in both levels of StrengthsFinder training. The sessions were four hours each and included:
Introduction to Strength Building, Discover Your Talents, Develop Your Strengths, Introduction to Strength-Based Teams, Leveraging Team Strengths, and Leading Strength-Based Teams.

Impact:

This training impacted over 45 NCTC employees. Employees developed a better understanding of themselves and each other by completing the StrengthsFinder 2.0 talent assessment tool where their top five themes of talents were identified.

While at this time it is hard to measure, the objectives of these sessions were to:

- To break down the silos and help people work more effectively together
- Help individuals develop greater self awareness around their own areas of talent
- Help engage the talents of individuals toward increased team performance
- Learn how to increase productivity and team effectiveness through leveraging team strengths
- Deepen their understanding of their intact work teams members’ strengths and how to more effectively maximize those strengths
- Teach team leaders how to sustain and maintain effective team performance by leveraging the strengths of individual team members

Reflections:

These training sessions were not mandatory courses and participation of new employees in Level I was lower than expected. Level II had great participation as these specific supervisors believe in this direction and strongly supported and encouraged employees to attend. Strengths-based leadership is a growing trend in leadership development and NCTC will continue to integrate it into the professional development planning at NCTC.