

# Staff Development Grant Report

## Northland Community and Technical College

*Project:* Discover Your Strengths – Strength-Based Leadership & Continuous Improvement

*Description:* Host a series of training sessions for college employees using StrengthsFinder Inventory and Quality Tools.

*Project leader:* Becky Lindseth, Director of Human Resources

*Award:* \$5,000

### Project Re-cap:

Continuous Improvement involves organizational quality and performance, focuses on improving customer satisfaction through continuous and incremental improvements to processes, by removing unnecessary activities and variations. "Quality is a never ending quest and Continuous Process Improvement is a never ending effort to discover and eliminate the main causes of problems. Continuous Process Improvement means making things better. It is NOT fighting fires. Its goal is NOT to blame people for problems or failures ... It IS simply a way of looking at how we can do our work better. When we engage in process improvement, we seek to learn what causes things to happen and then use this knowledge to: Reduce variation; Remove activities that have no value to the organization; and Improve customer satisfaction. Process improvement is important as it has often been said that process accounts for 80% of all problems while people account for the remaining 20%.

Our College hired trained and experienced individuals within Customized Training Departments to provide the various workshops. Eighty-seven employees participated in the various workshops that were conducted throughout spring semester of the academic year. Costs were as follows:

Facilitator Fees:	\$4,527.85
Materials and Supplies:	\$ 414.60
Refreshments:	<u>\$ 57.55</u>
 TOTAL	 \$5,000.00

### Impact:

Following the merger of two colleges in July of 2003, it was realized that often times two varying processes and procedures were occurring on each campus. Our objective was to provide the framework by which college employees were able to come together and determine standard operating procedures throughout the college while focusing on the process rather than the people. The efforts have resulted in individuals agreeing upon standard operating procedures that help employees work smarter, not harder and employee have been able to remove the emotion of the situation and realize the benefits of the final product. Outcomes of this training included:

- To develop a better understanding of each other within the organization
- To break down the silos and help people work more effectively together utilizing tools of quality
- To help individuals develop greater self awareness around their own areas of talent
- To help engage the talents of individuals toward increased team performance
- To overcome some of the natural “storming” (as a result of bringing the two campuses together and attempting to standardize systems/processes across the campuses) by finding a way to institutionalize the recognition and celebration of the strengths of team members
- To create positive energy among the team through the use of the Strengthfinder, and ensuing training

## **Reflections:**

### Strength-Based Leadership

The Strength-Based Leadership sessions were well attended with nineteen participants.

### Quality Tools

- ◆ Affinity Diagram/Brainstorming
- ◆ Fishbone/Cause and Effect
- ◆ Flowchart & Interrelationship Diagram

Each Quality Tools session was offered twice. The first sessions were well attended, while the second sessions had fewer participants. It is believed individuals were initially excited about the possibility of participating in a staff development opportunity and those who were interested, registered for the first available session.

We learned that most people did get something out of the workshops. It is not anticipated that everyone will implement the ideas learned in each of the sessions; however, the simple fact that people are having open conversation is helping to build relationships across campuses.