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CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER (CPM)

PROJECT PAPER

COST SAVING DELIVERY OF TRAINING

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STATE DOCUMENTS

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Due to budget constraints, I wanted to explore effective, viable, and cost saving methods for delivering the Agency's training programs that were different from the delivery methods currently utilized. I chose this topic because the Agency currently conducts most of the training in the Columbia area and at off-site facilities. Using this method of training delivery has resulted in expenses related to (1) travel for the participants (e.g.; vehicle mileage & gas, lodging, food expenses, and staff salaries for travel time); and (2) staff salaries for time to pack, transport, and set-up training materials.

I speculated that better use of the Agency's existing technological capabilities might be one avenue to explore. Additionally, computer-based training has been a recurring suggestion from training program participants. I used the Transportation Training program to illustrate the pros and cons of an alternate training delivery method.

The strategic management plan for SC Dept. of Social Services includes seven excellence initiatives in the following areas: leadership, strategic planning, focus on stakeholders, information & analysis, focus on staff, process management, and performance management. My project relates to each of the seven initiatives in the following ways:

1. Leadership: The leadership initiative deals with the leadership of the Agency becoming aligned behind a common vision and that vision being in line with our mission. The leadership training is an integral part of sharing the vision within the Agency. It is one of the most expansive avenues the agency has to communicate a common message to the different levels of management within the

Agency. If budget constraints result in a reduction in the delivery of the management/leadership training, there would undoubtedly be a diminished capacity within the Agency to share the vision of the Agency. Needless to say, this would be counter-productive to this particular initiative.

2. **Strategic Planning:** This initiative relates to collaboration, innovation and accountability. If I can find a more innovative way to deliver the Agency's training programs through a collaborative effort with the Information Technology staff, I will have met two of the three points in this initiative. The accountability component would be addressed in the reporting of cost savings while at the same time maintaining quality training.
3. **Stakeholder Focus:** It could be argued that the employees of the Agency are the stakeholders when it comes to the Agency's training programs. However, I believe the constituents of SC are also stakeholders and they have an expectation that we will be good stewards of their money. If a new approach to training delivery can be implemented which will benefit Agency employees and save taxpayer dollars, then I believe I will have been successful in focusing on our stakeholders.
4. **Information and Analysis:** This initiative entails an understanding of the services we deliver and analyzing ways to streamline the processes involved in service delivery. My project involves looking at and analyzing the current way we deliver training in this agency. Then comparing the current method with possible alternatives.

5. **Focus on Staff:** Ways to enhance job satisfaction, morale and participation are at the crux of this initiative. It has been a recurring request from employees that SD&T explore ways to bring training to the employees' location rather than have them come to us. If this can be achieved, we may see a slight increase in all of the areas addressed by this initiative.
6. **Process Management:** Primarily this initiative focuses on re-engineering, support services, and quality assurance. In seeking a different, efficient method of training delivery while still pursuing quality programs, this initiative will be addressed.
7. **Performance Management:** An effective strategic plan should include an assessment and improvement-planning step. This last initiative incorporates both and is included in the evaluation phase of my project.

DATA COLLECTION

In order to identify potential cost savings, I first needed to identify costs associated with training currently being delivered. To do this I utilized a cost center report that is generated on a monthly basis. The cost center report details expenses related to lodging, food, mileage, and vehicles for specific training. I discovered in working with the cost center report that it does not represent all expenses nor does the information contained in the report guarantee that all expenses for a particular area are included. So rather than take it at face value, I used the information as a reference point. The cost center report also excludes staff salaries associated with training. To gain a more accurate picture, I

wanted to include this information and did so by getting an average salary (\$29,090.59) for employees of this agency from our Human Resources division.

Once I determined the costs associated with training as it is currently delivered, I was able to extrapolate cost savings based upon some assumptions. This, however, did not help with determining costs associated with an alternate method of training delivery.

With help from our in-house computer guru, I comprised some cost information for an alternate method that surfaced.

DATA ANALYSIS

Not all of the training conducted by the Agency would lend itself to being delivered in a non-traditional format. Many of our courses include participant interactions through small or large group activities and, without these interactions, the effectiveness of the course would be compromised. However, we do have some courses which could be implemented through non-traditional means and remain just as effective as they would be in a group setting. For the purposes of illustrating potential cost savings, I examined the Transportation Training that was conducted in October 2001.

Below you will see a comparison between the [estimated] actual cost of the training delivered in four areas around the state versus the estimated cost of the same training delivered via a computer-based method utilizing a program called NetMeeting.

Traditional delivery method:

This training was delivered in four areas of the state (Columbia, Charleston, Greenville and Florence) as a one-day training course for an average of 30 participants per session. Seven trainers and four facilitators were utilized for each session. On average, six of the eleven trainers/facilitators traveled the day prior to training for distance and set-up purposes.

Trainers/facilitators, expenses

8 staff @ 16.375 hrs (to account for travel and set-up day prior).....\$7,330.76
(hourly salary*6 people*#hours used over 2 days*4 sessions)
3 staff @ 11.75 hrs (those who traveled the day of training).....\$1,972.59
Overnight accommodations for 8 staff @ \$65 per room.....\$ 520.00

Participants' expenses

30 participants @ 8.5 hrs (incl. est. avg. travel time of 30 min.).....\$14,269.80
Overnight accommodations for avg. of 3 participants (these were
generally people who could not attend the session in their area).....\$ 195.00

Room rental

1 large meeting room\$ 350.00
1 break-out room.....\$ 200.00

Total cost to deliver training.....**\$24,838.15**

Alternate/Computer-based training delivery method:

This method would utilize a program called NetMeeting. This program is a standard feature with Windows98 and above; therefore, all Agency computers come loaded with this feature and no additional purchases or programming would be needed. With this method each trainer could deliver their section of the training from their desk, if desired. However, since the trainers worked in teams, I based calculations on the utilization of the DSS computer lab in Columbia as the point of delivery (all trainers would present from this location).

There were approximately three participants from each of the 40 counties. Each county would have at least one designated computer for utilization of NetMeeting. Travel time for participants would be nonexistent since the computer used for the presentation would be located in the office in which they normally work.

Although all trainers were present at the training facility when training was delivered around the state, all trainers were not physically present for the actual presentation of materials; therefore, I did not assume that all trainers would be physically present for the presentation in this format, rather they would only be present for presentation of their section.

Theoretically, training delivered in this fashion could be delivered in one session. However, realistically, two sessions would probably be needed for ease in fielding questions and to accommodate those who could not be present for a specific date.

Trainers/facilitators' expense

5 staff (no facilitators would be necessary) @ 2 hrs.....\$279.80

(hourly salary*5 people*#hours used*2 sessions)

This calculation accounts for coverage of the examples previously explored in the break-out groups and time for questions.

2 staff @ 6 hrs.....\$335.76

(2 staff did not live in the Columbia area; therefore, their travel time has been factored into the calculation)

Participants' expenses

60 participants @ 6 hrs.....\$10,072.80

Total cost to deliver training.....**\$10,688.36**

Note: The cost to develop the material and print for participants would remain the same regardless of delivery method; therefore, it was not factored into the calculation. Only those figures which would change were explored.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In order to implement the use of NetMeeting, there are several steps that must be taken. I have listed those steps below:

1. Feasibility results from Charly Reese in the DSS IT dept.
2. Approval of the pilot plan which would involve several computers within the confines of the DSS state office building on Confederate Avenue in Columbia and possibly several outlying county offices.
3. Training of identified users for the pilot program, regarding how to use the system. This would most likely be conducted by me and should not take more than one week.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of the pilot program would take place after a three-month trial period and in a focus group setting, coordinated by me and including all users of the pilot system.

ACTION PLANNING

Action planning would include:

1. Development of recommendations, by the focus group, to (a) abandon the project; (b) make adjustments and retry the pilot; (c) make adjustments and begin statewide implementation; or (d) approve the pilot program as it is and begin statewide implementation.
2. If the focus group recommends that the program be implemented statewide, the focus group would also be responsible for drafting a proposed training schedule. This, however, could be done over the phone with the county directors and division heads or their appointees.
3. Development of a procedural manual for use of the new system. This task would most likely be completed by me, and then submitted for approval to the Agency heads.