



Nonprofit Staff Development Coalition Project History and Accomplishments

Established in March 2003, the Nonprofit Staff Development Coalition (NPSDC) currently consists of 27 nonprofit organizations in the greater Seattle-King-Snohomish Counties area. The NPSDC Project was created and developed as a project of the Center for Learning Connections (CLC), an established workforce development organization that has existed for more than 40 years. In October 2017, the NPSDC Project transitioned to a new host and was integrated as a program of 501 Commons.

Fueled by the economic situation facing the state of Washington in late 2002, severe budget cuts announced by lawmakers (particularly in the area of human services), and anticipated layoffs, the need for training – skill development and staff development – was even greater but more challenging to provide due to limited financial resources. The NPSDC project was created to significantly and beneficially fill this inevitable resulting void for employees in nonprofit organizations who serve tens of thousands of low-income children, adults, and families in the Seattle-King County area.

In April/May 2003, NPSDC's first task was to develop and administer a Staff Training Needs Survey to staff of the new nonprofit partner organizations, the purpose being to identify and prioritize critical "unmet" staff training needs. Based on the cumulative survey responses at that time, 8 priority training need areas were identified:

- "De-escalation"/communication skills
- Leadership/strategic thinking skills
- Building effective partnerships/collaborations
- Time/task management skills
- Case management skills
- Cultural competency
- An introduction to "Dependable Strengths"
- An introduction to "Appreciative Inquiry Process"

The Coalition members unanimously agreed that all eight of the training need areas directly or indirectly impact service delivery in human services. They worked collaboratively to develop a workshop schedule to deliver appropriate training to meet the identified needs during its pilot year from July 2003 - June 2004. High quality trainers were selected through an identified process. They worked closely with the NPSDC committee to develop customized, relevant, and responsive workshop curriculum.

Since July 2003 until today, 165 workshops have been developed and delivered, meeting high priority training need areas identified through the annual NPSDC Staff Training Need Survey.

An average of 30-50 participants attend these workshops. Workshop evaluations have been and are consistently positive.

The NPSDC Committee meets regularly to collaboratively work on its three Initiatives: Initiative #1 (Staff Training), Initiative #2 (Transfer and Application of Learning for Effective Job Performance), and Initiative #3 (Promoting a Consistent "Learning Culture" Within the Organization).

Noteworthy Accomplishments:

Since its inception in March 2003, the NPSDC Project has accomplished the following:

- Increased its membership of nonprofit member organizations from 8 to 27.
- Held 93 successful Coalition meetings with Committee members, represented by the member organizations. These collaborative meetings have resulted in the planning, design, development, and coordination of the annual Staff Training Needs Survey; successful high quality skill building workshops; the development of Coalition Initiatives 2 and 3; NPSCDC's Learning Statement; and three pilots of the Transfer of Learning (TOL) model.
- Designed, developed, and administered an annual needs assessment tool – the NPSDC Staff Training Needs Survey - to all levels of staff of NPSDC member organizations in order to identify critical skill building needs. Based on these identified needs, the Coalition committee works collaboratively and with selected trainers to develop and deliver relevant, effective staff development workshops.
- Since July 2003, 165 workshops have been developed and delivered based on the identified skill building training needs of staff of NPSDC member organizations. An average of 30-50 staff attended each of these workshops. Workshop evaluations continue to be positive.
- Coalition Initiative #2 (Transfer and Application of Learning): In 2005 the Coalition Committee designed two tools to track and assess the application of knowledge and skills gained from the NPSDC workshops for effective job performance:
 - A post workshop evaluation (e-mail) survey.
 - NPSDC "Learning Pods" sessions (incorporated at the end of each workshop in which participants complete an Action Plan committing to share and transfer their learning).
 - Tested three pilot versions of the "Transfer of Learning" (TOL) model, which continues to be refined.
- Coalition Initiative #3 (Promoting and Strengthening a Consistent "Learning Culture): The NPSDC Committee spent much of 2004 creating, developing, and designing the Coalition's first tool towards supporting this Initiative in member organizations. In March 2005, the Committee launched this tool, which is NPSDC's Learning Statement: *"We believe that learning is central and critical to what we do. Continuous and progressive learning creates opportunities,*

challenges how we normally see and do things, builds understanding of our missions, and strengthens community connections.”

- Value recognition for NPSDC’s work:
 - The NPSDC Project was featured in the September 2013 National Career Development Association’s Career Convergence online magazine. It was recognized as a respected and effective example of nonprofits joining forces and collaborating to provide quality professional development for their staff.
 - The NPSDC model has garnered the attention of other workforce development sectors not just in the Greater Seattle area, but in King County and other counties across the state, as well as in some other states nationwide. It is viewed as an innovative, respected, and effective collaboration of nonprofits to provide quality professional development of staff. Over the past several years, a couple of small nonprofits in Washington DC, a leadership consultant for nonprofits in Washington DC, and a large foundation that serves many nonprofits in Miami have expressed interest in NPSDC’s model. Their response in learning more about the model was overwhelmingly positive.
 - A few years ago Capella University (an online school) had its students in the Graduate program in Nonprofit Leadership do a study on successful coalitions. NPSDC was cited in this assignment as a successful coalition.