

Klondike Region Community Capacity Training

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Abstract:

In attaining healthy salmon resources our managers don't manage fish, they manage effects to fish, meaning mainly in practice: people, or "stakeholders". In managing stakeholders, stewardship plays an important role. Stewardship, meaning: "caring for something entrusted to us", relies on an important underlying understanding that it is up to ALL of us to care for the resource. This means management entities are not the only ones who assumes the responsibility for judiciously caring for our fish. There are many ways we can wisely care for our salmon resources, but all require skills. Fisheries managers have highly developed skills in relation to the work they do, and, so do stakeholders. Only, in terms of managing our salmon sustainably, stakeholder's skills (i.e. fishing) are sometimes best applied by NOT using them. By providing stakeholders with alternative skills, they can actually DO something to care for salmon. This project provided stakeholders with "tools" to actively participate in salmon restoration, habitat protection, and the stewardship of our salmon resources.

Purpose:

To develop skills in fishers and First Nation people so that these people can contribute to salmon restoration and attaining healthy salmon resources.

Method:

Host a comprehensive computer literacy course. The course should take into consideration: the personal schedules of seasonal workers and their ability to attend; the present level of skills that the trainees possess; and, the level of intimidation that these people feel towards formal training in terms of the project's effectiveness.

Course Objective:

Computer Literacy – MS Windows, word processing and spreadsheets.

Familiarization with computer related concepts: hardware & software; EDP (electronic data processing); documents & programs files, file format issues; the Windows '98 operating system; using Email, basic word processing, using MS Word 2000; browsing the Web; multimedia, scanners, digital cameras, etc.; and, introduction to spread sheets, basic formulas, and graphs.

Project Development:

Early in this project's development, training needs were assessed. A proposal to the Yukon Panel's Restoration and Enhancement Fund was developed to address these needs and methods to carry out the project were explored. Additional resources were explored and a proposal to the Klondike Region Training and Trust Fund was prepared. The Dawson Campus of Yukon College was contacted and training methods were explored with them. Klondike Infotech, a local computer service and training supplier, was also contacted and training methods were discussed.

Results:

Timing for the course was determined to best take place after the workers' field season in mid-September. Options to conduct the training at Yukon College became unavailable due to the project's timing and the College's inability to accommodate the training, as their course-load and computer facilities were fully booked. Options to conduct the training through Klondike Infotech were explored and the decision for them to host the course was made. A full-time, five days per week, 8 hours per day course was planned for six students to take place during the four weeks starting September 18th to October 13th. The low instructor to trainee ratio contributed to an intimate learning experience, as did the informal setting they provided. Six trainees were initially signed up for the course, two commercial fishers and four First Nation people associated with local area salmon restoration projects. Three people dropped-out of the course at various stages and two additional students were placed into the course. Five committed people that diligently completed the course achieved a very good familiarity with computers. Their level of expertise in Windows 98, MS Word 2000 and MS Excel 2000 is, if compared to the common level of computer knowledge among office employees in Dawson, above average. In this respect the course was a great success.

Recommendations:

(1) Course Timing:

Identifying a “window” for holding a course for seasonal workers is challenging. Traditional times that season workers work in the Dawson Region is between April and October and between October and April. Overlapping seasons, mid-April/Mid-May and mid-September/mid-October are for them, the best times to attend a course. These people are dependant on a large variety of work and usually MUST take work when it comes to them. In terms of maintaining full attendance, extra people should be identified and prepped for the course as dropouts were mainly due to people having to go to work.

(2) Training Provider:

Although Klondike Infotech provided excellent training to the seasonal workers and fully participated in the development of the course that was offered, if Yukon College was employed to conduct this training in the future, it is possible that additional funding would be available. However, Yukon College requires planning to take place at a much earlier stage as their computer facilities get booked well in advance.

(3) Methodology:

- Full-Time vs. Part-Time

Despite the challenge to organize a full-time course, this method works best for trainees as work for them usually means travel and attendance over the duration of a part-time course would be sporadic. It is recommended that this technique be used in future training.

- Low Instructor to Trainee ratio

The low number of students in this type of training is highly recommended. The student target group is generally quite intimidated by formal training. The low number of students makes for both meaningful interactions between the students and a trainer and respectful interactions, in terms of their present skill levels. Some students require more time than others. With a low number of students, the trainer can spend a lot more time with students who require more attention. In terms of effectiveness, it is recommended that this technique be used in future training.

- Informal Setting

The informal setting contributed to the effectiveness of this course. As mentioned, students from this target group (seasonal workers) are quite intimidated by formal training. The students from this target group are generally older (30yrs+) and they have generally not completed formal training, as opposed to “on-the-job” training, for many years – it is unfamiliar to them. The informal setting makes the learning atmosphere more comfortable and intimate. When the students are more comfortable and the training is more personal, they learn more and are more interested in learning. De-mystifying computers in this informal manner contributed to the project’s success. In terms of effectiveness, it is recommended that this technique be used in future training.

- Project Oriented Course

The computer literacy course was designed to be project oriented, using information and data from local area salmon restoration projects. By incorporating this element into the course it brought meaning to the curriculum. The target group (seasonal workers w/o computer skills) has not generally found a reason to acquire computer skills and computers generally seem very foreign to them. Despite the fact that computer skills will enhance their personal skills and employability, it is not necessarily understood WHY and HOW. By incorporating this project oriented initiative into the course the students realize the “why and how” computers can be utilized, hence, it means something to them. In terms of effectiveness, it is recommended that this technique be used in future training.

(4) Attendance:

Dropouts could be limited by requiring a deposit for the course that could be refunded once students complete the training. This type of incentive would limit dropouts among people not committed to the training, however it would not necessarily limit dropouts due to work/training conflicts. Attendance might be improved for these people by organizing a training allowance through government employment agencies, as the training makes them more employable.

(5) Additional Resources:

As mentioned, a proposal to the Klondike Region Training and Trust Fund was prepared. This proposal for additional funding was not granted on the basis that the organization thought the training could be accomplished more efficiently through Yukon College. As Yukon College was not able to complete the course given the identified needs (timing, methodology, etc.) it was decided that Klondike Infotech would be employed to conduct the training. Again, the training that Klondike Infotech provided was faultless and of very high-quality. However, future training should be planned and coordinated much earlier in the year to address the availability of the College, as it would increase the accessibility of

additional resources, and, open doors for people to continue training through the College's regular curriculum (i.e. upgrading writing skills, etc.). Coordination should be carried out with Yukon College to address these recommendations. Also, other government employment agencies should be contacted and opportunities to fund the training allowances should be sought.

(6) Follow-up:

Skills need to be reinforced over time. Reinforcing computer skills requires access to a computer. The YRCFA has recently acquired a dedicated computer and internet access through the Volnet Program. This computer will be set up and available at the local Dawson District Renewable Resources Council's office (also the office of the Yukon Salmon Committee's Habitat Steward) during regular business hours. It is recommended that the people who have acquired computer literacy training be allowed to access this computer and that the Habitat Steward be available to assist them should they need help with their computer difficulties.

Many thanks to the Yukon Panel and the Restoration and Enhancement Fund for providing funding to this valuable initiative.