

Partnership Models of Effective Non-credit Operations

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Team Charge: The charge assigned to Action Learning Team #1 was to conduct research aimed at revealing current higher education practices for designing and delivering continuing education and customized training. Further, the team was asked to identify and study the most successful models within MnSCU and across the nation in order to make recommendations for promising practices based on the findings.

Research Methods

Phase 1: During the fall 2013 semester, the Action Learning Team convened to design a survey and focus group questions targeted to MnSCU CE/CT administrators. The focus group was conducted with the CE/CT administrators during their CE/CT Fall 2013 Meeting. The survey was administered electronically to MnSCU CE/CT administrators following the meeting. Notes regarding the content of the focus group discussions were compiled and analyzed to add additional detail to the quantitative survey results.

Phase 2: During the spring 2014 semester, the Action Learning Team convened to design a set of interview questions that were subsequently administered via scheduled phone conferences or in-person with CE/CT administrators within MnSCU and across the region and nation. Team members compiled their individual notes and analyzed responses for common themes and patterns.

Results

Data collected from both phase 1 and phase 2 research methods were synthesized and analyzed to identify a set of successful models and to make recommendations regarding promising practices on a number of critical CE/CT model features.

Recommendations for Promising Practices

1. Clarity of purpose and alignment of CE/CT units across the system
2. Alignment of funding practices to CE/CT unit and system purpose
3. Updated system classifications for Customized Training Representatives (CTR) that accurately reflect the roles
4. Clearly defined metrics for measuring staff/team performance that are aligned with the overall purpose of the unit and system
5. Dedicated funding sources for new program development
6. Focused, coordinated marketing strategy
7. A consultative approach to assessing client needs
8. Clearly identified outcomes and measurement procedures for program evaluation
9. Measures of student competency that are determined on an "as needed" basis
10. Credit for coursework is considered and developed within a "contractual" context
11. Collaboration to reduce program development costs
12. System incentives developed and in place to reward collaborative efforts
13. Cooperative models for shared administrative services are in place to reduce costs related to billing, point of contact, etc.