



Developing Tomorrow's  
Workforce Today

Information and Communications Technology Council  
Conseil des technologies de l'information  
et des communications



# NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE CASE STUDY

## The Challenge

Northwest Community College is an institution that prides itself on offering programming that reflects the education and training needs of the communities it serves. It aims to provide students with the skills that are critical in today's ICT world.

Two years ago Dave O'Leary, Chief Information Officer at the college noticed a drop in enrolment rates. Students in his area were simply not entering the ICT field, thereby causing a decline in human resources for the local ICT industry. Following a needs assessment undertaking as well as local consultations, Mr. O'Leary found himself examining a much broader description of traditional ICT skills, with the need for business professionalism and ethics coming to the forefront. Mr. O'Leary realized that NWCC needed to capitalize on this opportunity and find a new and innovative way of delivering ICT learning to the community if he was to work towards solving the ongoing skills shortage.

## The Solution

Mr. O'Leary, working collaboratively with three other Northern Colleges and a Northern University decided to utilize the Information and Communications Technology Council's ICT Competency Profiles Framework into the curriculum design process for a new collaborative Northern IT Diploma program. Mr. O'Leary was familiar with the framework, having contributed to its development, and knew immediately that it would complement his program well. The framework gave the Northern Collaborative Team the ability to establish learning outcomes and define teaching modules which would address any knowledge and skills gaps that existed.

The implementation of the comprehensive framework would also prove to be invaluable by saving the college from spending tremendous time and resources on labour market information collection, allowing the development team to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of industry in Northern British Columbia and the Yukon.

In light of the extensive ICT industry consultations that were conducted during its creation, Mr. O'Leary was confident that the framework would provide him with the information and analysis critical to a successful curriculum redesign. Combined with additional local information as well as input and support from the Canadian Information Processing Society and significant industry players like Microsoft Canada, this proved to be the case.

"It was vital for us to work with a framework that incorporated more than just technical skills, but also defined and articulated the essential business and interpersonal skills that students require."

## The Impact

Even at the early stages of implementation, the framework has already made a significant impact to the collaborative NCIT program. The program curriculum is now being based on the framework's carefully-researched industry input, rendering course material extremely relevant and indispensable to students in the field of ICT. Through word of mouth, students are becoming aware of the value of the program, and enrolment has increased with more growth expected in the coming year as the second year of the program is developed.

The framework's partnership implications between industry and the institution are also quite substantial. Mr. O'Leary anticipates that ongoing curriculum validation can be achieved by working hand in hand with industry members, to an extent not seen before.

Mr. O'Leary believes that the greatest strength of the framework lies in the benefits it offers to both students and industry. With the help of the framework, the curriculum will be responding to industry needs and students will be trained to hit the ICT ground running. The students will be presented with a thorough program based on industry research that provides them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to immediately fulfill the human resource needs of employers. The framework will support their progression into the workforce, and assist them in their career path development.

"We want to offer our training in a way that benefits industry and enables the students to take advantage of the multitude of career options available to them in this field."



Canada

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 **NORTHWEST**  
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