

## 1 - Mission

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

## Argument

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1. In Spring 2015, President Hicswa launched the process to revise Northwest College's (NWC) seven-year-old Mission Statement to have it more accurately reflect the institution's current purpose and character. The process resulted in the NWC Board of Trustees (BOT) approval of the following new [Mission Statement](#) at its [March 14, 2016](#), regular meeting:

In the context of our global society, the mission of Northwest College is to: be student-centered; be forward thinking; cultivate community; prepare students for transfer, career, and life; and retain and graduate students.

Dr. Hicswa chose a revision process that sought employee input in the form of core concepts, words, and phrases that employees used to reflect their sense of NWC's essential character. Conducted during a late Spring 2015 all-employee meeting, the exercise refreshed employees' earlier input about major challenges faced by the college, a question she first put to the campus community during the first month of her presidency in 2013. After receiving [employee submissions](#), Dr. Hicswa called upon Assistant Professor of English Rachel Hanan and Instructor of Sociology/Anthropology Aura Newlin to identify common themes and create an employee questionnaire. Dr. Hanan and Ms. Newlin developed an online [Institutional Priorities Inventory](#) (IPI) questionnaire. The IPI's purpose was to:

1. Help employees and stakeholders be aware of values identified during the input process,
2. Guide development of a new Mission Statement, and
3. Help the college develop techniques for assessing how well the campus community is achieving its priorities.

President Hicswa promoted the IPI during her August 2015 State of the College Address, providing employees with a link to the IPI and calling for responses by September 4. She sent all-employee email reminders regarding the response deadline. [Survey results](#) reflected a 50% employee response rate—46% of faculty, 63% of Classified Staff, and 50% of Professional Staff.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the Institutional Researcher analyzed responses to determine the top-rated priorities for the new Mission Statement. Following this process, President Hicswa worked with Professors Hanan and Newlin and the 2015-16 Student Senate President to identify words and phrases that emerged as common themes. From that work, an innovative Mission Statement format, employing a “word cloud” to cluster the words and phrases on one page with the most highly valued elements appearing in larger type to denote prominence, was developed to represent the College’s essential character. Dr. Hicswa updated Trustees on the revision process at their [January 2016 meeting](#).

Public and student input were sought to ensure that revisions to Mission Statement and Vision 2020 were informed by area residents, students, and employees. The Vice President for College Relations sent personal invitation letters to 289 external stakeholders, including current and former Trustees; emeritus professors/administrators; current and former members of the Alumni Association and Foundation Boards of Directors; public school superintendents; media; city, county, chamber of commerce and economic development representatives; legislators; and banking, healthcare and University of Wyoming representatives. Approximately 25 area residents participated in an [October 1, 2015, public meeting](#); an additional 20 individuals who were unable to attend the evening meeting requested to participate in the survey via email. The 2015-16 Student Senate President sought input from student senators in an [October 6, 2015, meeting](#). Results of that input informed both documents.

The Institutional Researcher and VPAA conducted statistical analysis to determine employees’ top-rated themes, inter-question reliability within themes, and significant differences between constituency groups. The themes that rose to the top became the five mandates in the new Mission Statement, and the distinct IPI list items comprising those umbrella themes serve to operationalize how the campus lives out its mission.

The College Council considered and recommended approval of the new Mission Statement on [March 1, 2016](#), before Board of Trustees adoption on March 14, 2016. It was subsequently incorporated in multiple public documents and venues in Spring 2016, as addressed in 1.B.

The new Mission Statement is actionable, measurable, and meaningfully tied to campus identity and reflects and fuels employees' commitment to continuous quality improvement.

2. The [breadth of instructional programming](#) is consistent with NWC’s mission to prepare students for transfer, career, and life. NWC’s commitment to general education in its curriculum provides its students with a foundation for lifelong learning. A faculty-based [Curriculum Committee](#) meets regularly to review proposals for new courses, certificates, and programs. NWC currently offers 67 AA, AS or AAS degree programs and 26 certificates.

Consistent with its student-centered mission, NWC provides student housing, with residential programming and activities intended to promote the social and psychological development of students. Based upon Fall 2016 enrollment data as noted in NWC's [Institutional Profile](#), of the 1,715 students enrolled, 615 chose to live on campus with 553 in residence halls and 62 in apartments. Student services include residence life programming, a full-service bookstore, the Johnson Fitness Center, Student Health Service, disability services, short term counseling, peer tutor program, student employment positions, and financial aid services (see 3.D.).

NWC's enrollment profile reflects its mission to prepare students for transfer, career, and life in the context of a global society. According to [Fall 2016 Wyoming Community College Commission \(WCCC\) data](#), 68% of NWC’s students were in transfer programs, the highest percentage in the state, and 21% were in occupational programs. Seventy-eight percent of students were from Wyoming, 18%

from other states, and 4% from other countries.

3. President Hicswa and the President's Advisory Council have aligned planning and budgeting with the Mission (see 5.C.1).

## Sources

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- BOT\_Minutes\_March142016
- College Council\_Minutes\_March12016
- College Council\_Minutes\_March12016 (page number 2)
- Curriculum\_Comm\_Minutes\_Feb232016
- Institutional Priorities Inventory questions\_FINAL
- Institutional Priorities Inventory\_Summary\_statistics
- Institutional\_Profile\_2017
- Mission Statement\_2016
- Mission Statement\_Community Survey\_Public Meeting\_Results\_Cloud
- Mission Statement\_Employee Submissions\_April 2015
- Mission Statement\_Student Survey\_Results\_Feb32016
- WYCCC\_Fall2016\_enrollment\_report

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

### Argument

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1. Northwest College (NWC) articulates its [Mission Statement](#) through a variety of documents that are available to the public. The online Mission Statement publication includes a description of each of the five overarching elements of the mission. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) identified strategic priorities and key performance indicators for NWC's five-year strategic vision, [Vision 2020](#). Following adoption of the Mission Statement by the Board of Trustees (BOT) on [March 14, 2016](#), President Hicswa promoted the new document among employees and continued to make verbal and visual references to the statement during her twice-a-year State of the College Addresses, monthly all-employee meetings, and in various public presentations, e.g., service clubs, chambers of commerce.

The Mission Statement is presented publicly in both print and Web-based venues and made available to the public through the following communication initiatives.

- [Institutional Fact Card](#) – Mailed annually with a letter from the President to more than 1,200 external stakeholders and put in all employee and Student Senate campus mailboxes
- [Institutional Profile](#) – A component of the online Annual Report
- [Annual Report](#) – Promoted via paid newspaper ads in NWC's service area, news releases, and postcards to external stakeholders and employees; remains in place for a full fiscal year before the next version is published
- [BOT Web page](#)
- [Desk cubes](#) – Provided to all employees for display in their offices and other work spaces; the cubes display the Mission Statement, Vision 2020, and institutional logo
- [Wall presentation](#) – Presented in lettering on a prominent wall in the lobby of the Orendorff Building and framed documentation in campus buildings.
- [BOT agendas](#) – Printed at the bottom of every BOT meeting agenda

2. Mission documents, the Mission Statement and Vision 2020, are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission. [Descriptive bullets](#) explain each of the Mission Statement's five overarching elements in depth.

3. Each of the three strategic priorities in Vision 2020, Experience, Connections, and Environment, are elaborated by specific, measurable [key performance indicators](#) that identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the programs and services NWC provides. Mission and

Vision 2020 documents explain the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services.

## Sources

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- Board of Trustees\_Agenda\_June 2017
- Board of Trustees\_List\_Website
- BOT\_Minutes\_March142016
- BOT\_Minutes\_March142016 (page number 3)
- Institutional\_Fact\_Card\_2017
- Institutional\_Profile\_2017
- Mission Statement\_2016
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- Vision\_2020\_KPI\_2016\_Final

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

### Argument

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1. To fulfill Northwest College's (NWC) mission within a global context, NWC addresses its role in a multicultural society in several ways. The Office of Intercultural Programs (OIP), with a staff of two, actively [recruits](#) diverse students both domestically and internationally, offers education abroad opportunities, and promotes cultural awareness through on campus and community programming.

The OIP recruits international and multicultural students and has international recruitment contracts with agencies in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and in the US. The OIP advertises and markets globally to promote NWC. For the last two years, [international enrollment](#) has averaged 65 students each semester as demonstrated in the table below.

Enrollment Period	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017
Number of International Students	68	58	56	74	70
Number of Countries Represented	34	23	23	26	25
Countries with Highest Number	South Korea, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan	Japan, UK, Canada, Vietnam	Canada, Japan, UK, Vietnam	Japan, UK, Vietnam	Japan, UK, China, Canada

The OIP offers support services for international and multicultural students including academic, cultural and social, and immigration advising. Student services across campus contribute to the success of students including counseling, library, disability support, tutoring, and advising.

2. The [diversity](#) of the NWC student population mirrors the diversity of the NWC service area.

NWC integrates multicultural and international students into the campus community through academic and student life activities including resident life programs and the Multicultural Club (MC). The MC, one of the largest student clubs, meets on a weekly basis. The club's activities include trips to surrounding areas such as Billings, Thermopolis, Yellowstone National Park, Salt Lake City,

Denver, Red Lodge, Heart Mountain, Sleeping Giant, and Gallagher's Corn Maze. Activities include swimming, bowling, movie nights, game nights, karaoke, and campus and local sporting events. The MC and OIP collaborate with the Native Ways Club, Campus Ventures, Spanish Club, and the Gay Straight Alliance. These clubs use the Intercultural House and the Intercultural Program office for meetings, programs, and events.

The OIP coordinates [multicultural programs](#) that introduce diverse cultures to the campus and community. Programs include guest speakers and classroom presentations to introduce human diversity in educational settings. Student designed programs include Chilean Night, Vietnamese Night, and Pakistani Night. Other programs include guest speakers from traditionally underrepresented populations, Global Engagement Discussions by faculty and staff who have had intercultural experiences, and film screenings and discussions. Multicultural students cook and serve ethnic meals in the dining hall during lunch hours once a week. Lunches are accompanied by multimedia presentations. OIP organizes the [annual Multicultural Showcase](#) which usually attracts 300-500 people from around the area. NWC celebrates International Education Week, Hispanic Heritage Month, African-American History Month and Women's History Month with weekly programming. Programs are open to the public and attract students, faculty and staff, and community members.

The [Diversity Awareness Committee](#) (DAC) promotes diversity to foster an environment of inclusiveness. The DAC guides employees and students concerning equity for, and acceptance of, differences in ability, age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion and spirituality in the college community. The DAC authored the Respect for Diversity Statement, which faculty members are required, through the [syllabus guidelines](#), to include for each of their classes:

The NWC community includes a rich mix of individuals who, through their distinctive viewpoints, personalities, and life experiences, contribute to an intellectually stimulating and supportive culture. NWC's commitment to diversity is central to understanding and learning through the promotion of free and open inquiry and discussion. We recognize that our success as an institution depends on an environment where all individuals are included in NWC's community regardless of, but not limited to race, age, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, citizenship, religious affiliation, or disability.

NWC promotes international learning opportunities for its students, faculty, and staff. NWC is a member of the College Consortium for International Studies, which grants access to more than 90 education abroad programs. NWC has formed international partnerships with institutions in Scotland and Nepal for study abroad and faculty exchange opportunities. Since the formation of these two partnerships, no students or faculty have engaged in a study abroad or faculty exchange. Regardless, NWC values these partnerships because they offer study abroad and faculty exchange opportunities. During 2016-2017, NWC offered field study courses to England, Japan, and Costa Rica. A total of 62 students enrolled in these study abroad courses.

OIP staff are members of the National Association of International Educators. NWC works with EducationUSA, American Councils, the Year of Exchange in America for Russians program, BECAS Chile (a scholarship program through the Chilean Ministry of Education), the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange program, and the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan.

OIP staff work to recruit and retain Native American students and have attended several conferences and recruiting fairs, including the Wyoming Native American Education Conference and the 2016 College & Career Readiness Summit. The OIP collaborates with the curator of the Plains Indian Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West on Native American programming. NWC celebrates

Native American Heritage Month on campus through a variety of programs, including a tipi raising and a fry bread demonstration. The Native Ways Club plans activities such as taco and fry bread sales, dream catcher nights, beading/choker nights, arrowhead and arrow crafting events, and the annual [Buffalo Feast](#).

These processes and activities reflect NWC's attention to human diversity to fulfill its mission in a global society.

## Sources

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- Board of Trustees\_Board Book\_July 2017 (page number 53)
- Course\_syllabi\_universal\_guidelines\_2017
- Diversity Awareness Committee\_Website
- Intercultural Programs\_Events Data\_2014-2017
- Intercultural Programs\_Strategic Plan\_2012-2017
- Intercultural Programs\_Strategic Plan\_2012-2017 (page number 3)
- Multicultural Showcase\_News\_March 2017
- Native Ways\_Buffalo Feast\_2016
- Student Demographics\_Service Area Comparison\_2016

## 1.D - Core Component 1.D

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The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Argument

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1. Northwest College's (NWC) [Mission Statement](#) charges the college to "cultivate community" to support its public service obligation. A [key performance indicator](#) (Connections within Service Area) used to measure the "Connections" strategic priority in Vision 2020 demonstrates NWC's focus on public service.

The following actions and decisions illustrate NWC's understanding of its role in serving its community:

- The public has access to and uses a variety of [campus facilities](#), e.g., Hinckley Library, Johnson Fitness Center, Yellowstone Building Conference Center, [Mickelson Field Station](#), and Cabre Gymnasium at affordable rates or no cost.
- Technical program advisory committees include members of the public who possess background and expertise in various program areas.
- NWC brings more than 100 annual cultural events and activities to campus for faculty, staff, students, and area residents. The schedule is made available via a comprehensive online [calendar of events](#) on the NWC's web site. NWC engages with external audiences through a variety of summer camps, e.g., athletics, visual and performing arts, guest lecturers, speech tournaments, skills contests and clinics, Wyoming Academic Challenge, Writers Series, and Career Fair for high school sophomores.
- District residents 60 years of age or older are eligible for a [Golden Age Card](#) that qualifies them for tuition waivers for up to six credit hours per semester, admission to most campus social, cultural, and athletic events without charge, and admission to the Johnson Fitness Center and other events at reduced rates.
- United States military personnel—veterans, active duty and reservists—qualify for free admission to select NWC events with a [Military Free-admission Card](#). In 2016, NWC constructed a veterans lounge that serves as a meeting space for groups and a gathering space for students with a military background.
- NWC maintains active involvement in chambers of commerce and economic development organizations in its district.
- Service learning components are part of many classes and instructional programs, e.g., First-year Seminar, Photo Theme Seminar, Art Department's Empty Bowls event, Student Senate, and athletics teams.
- [Community survey results](#) help NWC better understand public attitudes, perceptions, and

desired courses and services.

- The President, Board of Trustees (BOT) members, and Vice Presidents maintain contact with and participate in statewide agencies, e.g., the Wyoming Community College Commission and its statewide consultation groups, Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees, Complete College Wyoming and WyDEC (statewide distance education consortium).
- [The Partnership Report](#) is a summary of educational, community, and regional development partnerships that demonstrate NWC's commitment to the public good.

NWC is governed by a seven-member, locally elected, unpaid Board of Trustees from within three sub-districts in its tax district of Park County, Wyoming. The following BOT practices and decisions provide evidence that NWC takes its public service role, public access, and public accountability seriously.

- An Open Forum is part of every regular monthly BOT meeting agenda, thereby providing access for members of the public who wish to address trustees.
- The BOT publishes and archives its [meeting minutes](#) on NWC's website.
- The BOT publishes and archives its [Rules and Regulations](#) on the website.
- Public input/involvement is sought on major decisions, e.g., [Facilities Master Plan development](#), presidential searches, Mission Statement and strategic plan development, and is thoroughly considered in decision-making processes.
- While most regular BOT meetings are held on campus, trustees schedule regular meetings twice a year in the NWC district's other two larger communities, [Cody](#) and [Meeteetse](#), to provide more access to taxpayers outside Powell and to help BOT members become better acquainted with NWC's entire district.
- The BOT follows a practice of delaying consideration of major action items for one month until they are discussed as information items.
- Commitments to compliance with Wyoming Open Meetings and Public Records Acts are noted in Chapter V of the BOT's [Rules and Regulations](#), a document that is reviewed annually by the BOT.
- A [Summer 2012 decision](#) to engage in a creative funding partnership to cover approximately 38% of a new \$13.1 million instructional building reflected the BOT's awareness of and sensitivity to the depressed economy's impact on district residents.

2. As a publicly funded college, NWC has no obligations to external financial interests. NWC's educational focus is evident in its mission documents.

3. NWC commits itself to engaging with its external constituencies in service district communities and responding to their needs. The President, Office of College Relations, and other college departments regularly communicate with the general public and to external stakeholders, e.g., public school officials, city and county officials, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, financial institutions, donors, health care administrators, legislators. This communication occurs in the following ways:

- Institutional Fact Cards are mailed annually to hundreds of [external stakeholders](#).
- Nearly 300 news releases are annually disseminated to local, and occasionally regional, media outlets and published on the NWC [News Desk](#) to keep the public abreast of developments, activities, classes, workforce training offerings, and events. A comprehensive online calendar of events and social media are utilized to assist with event promotion.
- Program-specific (e.g., art gallery, athletics, and music) communications inform area residents of activities and events.
- [Annual Reports](#) are published online and promoted via newspaper advertisements in the service

area and direct-mailed postcards to hundreds of external stakeholders. Content is organized according to strategic priorities in Vision 2020.

- [Legislative Relations Plans](#) are specific to each session of the Wyoming State Legislature and include several initiatives.
- Monthly e-newsletters are sent by the President to service area legislators to emphasize major developments and campus accomplishments.
- The President and Vice President for College Relations (VPCR) conduct one-on-one meetings with service area legislators to help them understand the Wyoming system of colleges' annual legislative agenda and to maintain strong relationships with them.
- The President and VPCR attend portions of legislative sessions.
- The President maintains a [From the President](#) blog to communicate and interact with members of the public and employees.
- Regular introductions of selected NWC employees and students are made to the general public via pre-arranged radio talk show programs.
- [Crisis communication](#), part of the [Emergency Operations Plan](#), is devoted to informing internal and external stakeholders about crises and other emergency situations.

NWC responds to the needs of its external constituencies through the following programs:

- Concurrent and dual enrollment programs (see 3.A.)
- [Center for Training and Development](#)
- [Adult Education](#)
- Cultural events, e.g., [Art](#), [Music](#)

## Sources

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- [Adult Education\\_Website](#)
- [Annual\\_Report\\_Overview\\_Website\\_2016-2017](#)
- [Board of Trustees\\_Rules\\_revised\\_May 2017](#)
- [Board of Trustees\\_Rules\\_revised\\_May 2017 \(page number 9\)](#)
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- [Financial\\_Aid\\_Disclosures\\_Student\\_Consumer\\_Information\\_2017](#)
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- Music\_Events\_Calendar
- News\_desk
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- WYCCC\_partnership\_report.2016

## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### Summary

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Northwest College (NWC) fulfills Criterion One through a clearly defined [Mission Statement](#) that is publicly articulated and guides NWC's operations.

Adopted in Spring 2016, the statement includes five commitments presented graphically in a word cloud enhanced by defining phrases linked to each commitment. The President's annual operational plan flows from NWC's Mission Statement and strategic [Vision 2020](#) and addresses key performance indicators. NWC's programs, services, and its enrollment profile are aligned with the Mission Statement.

NWC's budget-development process, which was refined in Spring 2016, has a twofold goal of greater involvement of budget managers and more consistent data-based decision making. During the budget development process, the constituent-based Budget Committee consistently referenced the mission. Early success with the new process helped foster more intentional linkage between planning and budgeting.

NWC's Mission Statement is articulated to the public in a variety of print and electronic venues and promoted among employees. Having been revised during the 2015-16 year, both the Mission Statement and Vision 2020 are current and benefited from the input of both internal and external constituencies.

NWC explicitly recognizes its role in a diverse society. Its Mission Statement is led by, "In the context of our global society, the mission of NWC is to...." NWC has the largest international student enrollment of any Wyoming community college. Cultural awareness programming is promoted among area residents. NWC maintains student clubs for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, Native Indian students, and multicultural students. NWC's Diversity Awareness Committee seeks to foster an environment of inclusiveness on campus.

Within the framework of its mission and statutory requirements, NWC takes seriously its obligation to serve the public good. Policies, actions, decisions, and practices of the Board of Trustees and of NWC's various units are consistent with its obligations as a public institution. One of the Mission Statement's five commitments—"Cultivate community"—is, in part, defined as "Upholding a culture of accountability, integrity, and respect." Extensive public use of NWC's facilities and robust external partnerships are centerpieces of NWC's commitment to the public.

NWC maintains a strong educational focus that takes primacy over other purposes, a focus evidenced in its Mission Statement and among key performance indicators that address each strategic priority in the strategic plan, Vision 2020.

Employee Feedback on Criterion One

The Assurance Argument Team held informational workshops on Criterion One on Oct. 10th and 12th, 2016. At those workshops, employees were asked to provide [evidence statements](#) pertaining to the sub-components of this criterion.

### Future Plans

NWC will continue to base initiatives, decisions and growth on the Mission Statement and Vision 2020. The communication efforts initiated by President Hicswa in 2013 to engage employees and community, including all-employee meetings, constituent group leadership meetings, task forces, and regular electronic communication, will be sustained and enhanced.

### Sources

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- Criterion 1\_Workshop Comments
- Mission Statement\_2016
- Vision\_2020\_KPI\_2016\_Final