

NWACC's Guide to AQIP Action Projects

While efforts to improve NWACC's curricula, student services and all other aspects of the college's work have been and continue to be crucial to NWACC's culture of continuous improvement, NWACC needs to identify particular continuous improvement projects as AQIP Action Projects in order to maintain our NCA/AQIP accreditation. Ultimately the work carried out in the process of completing Action Projects and the methods in which this work is recorded and documented will serve as important components of NWACC's accreditation Systems Portfolio. Because of their importance to NWACC's continued institutional accreditation, new Action Projects will be carefully chosen, typically after a substantial process of discussion and revision. Please consult both the NWACC Institutional Effectiveness webpage at <http://www.nwacc.edu/aqip> for information on current NWACC action projects and the AQIP web site at <http://www.aqip.org/> for information about Action Projects.

AQIP Action Projects

An Action Project is an activity that requires the use of Continuous Improvement tools in an attempt to solve an identified opportunity for improvement. The Higher Learning Commission requires that one or more of a college's action projects address "Helping Students Learn." The other projects may address any of the other eight AQIP categories. The categories can be found at <http://www.nwacc.edu/AQIP/SystemsPortfolioAQIPCategoryQuestions.php>.

1. AQIP projects do NOT describe the solution to a problem or ask for new resources without data to support that request. They DO describe a problem that needs to be solved.
2. AQIP projects DO involve considerable investigation, brainstorming, and rethinking.
3. AQIP projects DO involve teams of people from multiple departments, divisions, and job categories. When someone proposes an improvement project, he or she should be aware that a wide range of people will be involved in thinking about the problem.

Action Project Proposal Process

1. The Quality Council (QC) will welcome proposals at any time from any member of the college community. Proposals may also come from individual students, faculty, staff, and college organizations, the President's Cabinet or Expanded Cabinet.
2. The QC will do an initial review of the projects using the criteria listed on the application form.
3. Projects that pass the initial review will be assigned a consultant who will guide the proposed project through the next phase. If necessary, further conversations with affected constituencies will be coordinated. Further discussions about the focus, timeline, and outcomes associated with the project will take place among multiple parties.

4. After further conversation and commentary, the QC will recommend the projects to the Expanded Cabinet. The recommendation will request that the Expanded Cabinet identify which projects they will support as NWACC's next official AQIP project(s). One other "on deck" project will be proposed and may be implemented if one of the recommended projects cannot be pursued.
5. The Expanded Cabinet will select Action Projects and an "on deck" project. A sponsor will be assigned by the Expanded Cabinet for each project.
6. Proposal not selected to become Action projects can be adopted as CI initiatives by the Expanded Cabinet.

Criteria for Reviewing Action Projects

1. The selection process will be attentive to other continuous improvement efforts at the college and watch for duplicated efforts.
2. Criteria for evaluating proposed projects include:
 - a. Clear and specific and measurable outcomes
 - b. Explanation of significance to the college mission
 - c. A clear timeline for completion
 - d. Reference to at least two AQIP categories
 - e. Strong preference will be given to those projects that focus on student learning, as well as to projects likely to impact multiple departments or divisions.

Relation of this Project Proposal Process to the development of other Continuous Improvement Projects

While it is important for the college community to be aware of and have the ability to propose AQIP projects, this is not the only way in which projects may be developed. For instance, a survey of continuous improvement projects currently underway at the college may uncover one that would be suitable to track as an official project. All projects will need to be reviewed by the QC and ultimately approved by the Expanded Cabinet.

Marketing, Communicating the Project Proposal as Process

1. A application form can be found on the NWACC's Institutional Effectiveness website at the following URL: <http://www.nwacc.edu/AQIP/ActionProjectsMainPage.php>. If proposals of particular timelines are being solicited, an email will be sent to the college community alerting everyone to that fact.
2. Barring special needs, the regular review date for proposals will be November of each year.
3. The "Guide to Action Projects" is posted on the Institutional Effectiveness website <http://www.nwacc.edu/AQIP/ActionProjectsMainPage.php> and included in continuous improvement marketing materials.
4. A form, used to evaluate proposed Action Projects, will be posted on NWACC's Institutional Effectiveness web page.