AQIP Action Projects: Purpose and Selection Process

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The purpose of Action Projects

NMU’s pathway to accreditation requires a demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement; Action Projects are key to this process. AQIP recommends that campuses attempt as many Action Projects as possible and complete each as soon as possible. At a minimum, NMU is required to maintain at least three Action Projects at all times and share publically their results. At least one of the ongoing Action Projects must support Category One of the Systems Portfolio: Helping Students Learn.

Benefits of Action Projects

Action Projects engage faculty, staff and students in continuous improvement efforts by encouraging involvement in the project selection process. Additionally, individuals from across campus are given the opportunity to share their experience and knowledge by participating in Action Project teams. Central to AQIP’s expectations is for faculty, staff and students to communicate shared goals that produce tangible results.

Action Project activities also provide campuses the opportunity to gather improvement results rather quickly, from six months to up to two years depending upon the scope of the project. Action Project results ultimately serve as a foundation for the successful completion of a Systems Portfolio, providing positive evidence of continued improvement. Since launching its first Action Project in 2003, NMU’s ability to engage faculty, staff and students in Action Project activity and produce positive results has been recognized by AQIP in annual update reports and in Systems Appraisal results.

Selecting Action Projects

It is AQIP’s position that each campus should chose Action Projects that would be of most benefit to faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders. AQIP does not formally approve Action Projects; however, guidelines are put forth to assist campuses in their selection processes. AQIP recommends that potential Action Projects meet the following criteria:

- As a result of the Action Project, a significant and visible difference can be made to institutional performance.
- Action Project goals are challenging but attainable.
- Action Project outcomes would not happen ordinarily on campus; they are the result of a unique set of circumstances designed to address a specific performance need on campus.
- Both efficiency and benefit to stakeholders and students should be considered.

NMU has adopted a systematic Action Project selection process that creates an annual slate of Action Projects chosen primarily from the following three sources:

- **Systems Appraisal**: Every four years, NMU receives feedback from AQIP regarding the areas on campus that need improvement. Any “O” scores identified in the Systems Appraisal, or areas identified as those needing improvement, could be candidates for Action Projects. This is
especially the case if “O” scores have occurred repeatedly in a particular area of the Systems Appraisal.

- **Service Unit Objectives**: Service Unit objectives are reviewed annually by the Service Unit Assessment Committee. Objectives align with strategic initiatives and provide support for the Systems Portfolio. Action Projects selected from Service Unit objectives have the potential to impact all areas of campus.

- **Campus Solicitation**: Suggestions from all areas of campus including student and employee groups, committees, task forces, President’s Council and division heads can serve as a source for Action Project proposals.

The process by which a proposal becomes an Action Project is as follows:

1. Suggestions may be sent to [aqip@nmu.edu](mailto:aqip@nmu.edu), the AQIP coordinator or a member of the Accreditation Steering Committee.

2. All Action Project proposals are reviewed by the Accreditation Steering Committee once per semester. Proposals will be evaluated and prioritized on the basis of the following criteria:
   - The extent to which the proposal aligns with NMU’s core values, strategic goals and mission statements
   - The benefit that the proposed project is expected to deliver to faculty, staff and students
   - The AQIP-related goal or recommendation that the project will address
   - In some cases, the timeframe of the proposed project and its likelihood to produce positive results considering other ongoing activities on campus

3. Proposals will result in one of the following responses from the Accreditation Steering Committee:
   - **The proposal is approved, an Action Project Team is created and a charter is drafted. See the attached form for a complete list of charter document questions.**

Individuals involved in this process will include the sponsor(s) of the original proposal and others on campus who are identified to be stakeholders in the project, as well as individuals who volunteer to participate. The Action Project team, including its sponsor(s) will provide the following documentation:

- Why are the proposed Action Project goals high among current priorities?
- Who will be most affected by or involved in the proposed project?
- Which key organizational process(es) will be changed or improved?
- What is the rationale for the timeframe proposed?
• How will the Action Project be monitored?
• What are the “outcome” measures that will determine if the Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals?
• What resources will be necessary to support the project?

A completed draft document will be forwarded to any additional stakeholders identified by the Committee as well as members of the President’s Council for approval.

• The proposal is returned for clarification or revision.
• The proposal is rejected for not meeting the Action Project criteria described above, and may be routed to a different area of campus.

The Accreditation Steering Committee will maintain an ongoing list of Action Projects with at least two projects approved by the Accreditation Steering Committee, stakeholders directly involved in the proposed project and the President’s Council.

Documentation regarding all NMU current and completed Action Projects can be found at http://www.nmu.edu/aqip/node/53.
NMU Action Project Declaration

Title:

Systems Portfolio Category:

Planned Project Launch Date:

Target Completion Date:

1. Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

2. Describe your institution’s reasons for initiating this Action Project now and for how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution’s recent or soon-to-be submitted portfolio.

3. List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress for each goal. Be sure to include formal evaluations when the project progress will be reviewed.

4. Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project’s duration.

5. Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

6. Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project’s goals.

7. Provide any additional information that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project.