

23-26

Northwestern Health Unit

Strategic Plan

January 2023 - December 2026



Northwestern
Health Unit

www.nwhu.on.ca

INTRODUCTION

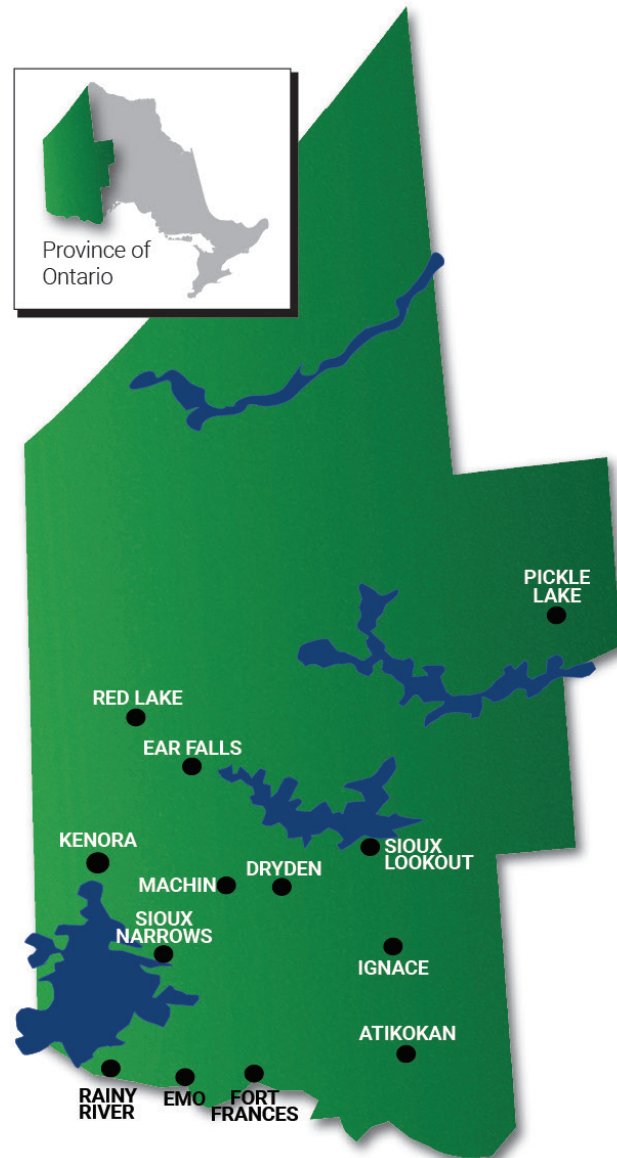
Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) works to improve the quality and length of life in our communities: healthy lifestyles, longer lives, lived well.

The health unit provides a wide range of services under the authority of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, related legislation, regulations and service standards. We work with individuals, families, groups, partner agencies and communities to provide services in several areas:

- health promotion – promoting health of the public by changing knowledge, attitudes, practices and environmental supports for health-related behaviours.
- disease and injury prevention – preventing or limiting substance misuse, injuries and the spread of dental decay and infectious diseases.
- health protection – reducing risks to human health in the environment caused by unsafe food, water, air or other health hazards.
- population health assessment and surveillance – monitoring and understanding the health conditions and issues impacting health in the area.
- emergency preparedness – coordinating our planning and response to emergencies such as forest fires, floods or chemical spills with local partners and municipalities.

NWHU can trace its history back to 1948 when Order in Council 1005/48 created the Kenora-Keewatin Area Health Unit. At that time, the health unit catchment area included Kenora, Keewatin, Jaffray Melick and nearby townships like Redditt, Haycock and Pellatt. The name was changed to Northwestern Health Unit in 1962 when Fort Frances and some of the organized townships in the Rainy River District were included in the areas served by the organization, and our present catchment area was in place by 1968 when Atikokan, Emo and Rainy River joined the health unit.

The catchment area of NWHU is about 171,288 square kilometres with a population of approximately 82,000. It includes 19 municipalities, 39 First Nation communities and two unincorporated or “unorganized” territories (Rainy River Unorganized and part of Kenora Unorganized).



The health unit is led by a Medical Officer of Health and a Chief Executive Officer, and governed by a Board of Health that includes municipal and provincial appointees. The number of staff has grown from six in 1948 with a budget of \$25,000 to 160 staff in 2022 with a budget of approximately \$15,720,000.

PURPOSE

The Strategic Plan outlines the priorities of Northwestern Health Unit based on the current and anticipated health needs of our communities and the mandate of public health. It:

- lays out a common vision, mission, values, goals and objectives for health unit programs and staff;
- acts as a communication tool with our partners and service users.

OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Board of Health began planning for the development of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan in the fall of 2021 based on following principles:

- **Stakeholder engagement** – The strategic plan will be based on input from our stakeholders, including the people we serve, our partners, funders and staff.
- Northwestern Health Unit programs and priorities will be based on:
 - The **mandate of public health** as outlined in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA) and various supporting documents that guide the scope of our work.
 - **Evidence-informed practice** – We use the best-available evidence about community need and program impact in planning, delivery and evaluation of our programs and services.
 - **Partnership and collaboration** – The best results are achieved when we work in collaboration with others. We actively seek out and engage in partnerships with others to plan, deliver and evaluate health unit programs and services.
 - **Capacity** – NWHU will continue to focus our resources where they will have the most impact.
- **Flexibility** – As the health unit and society at large emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, our strategic plan must enable NWHU to respond to a changing environment.

Development of the strategic plan was supported by external consultants *LBCG – Consulting for Impact* and guided by a sub-committee of the Board of Health and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

Health unit teams and individual staff use the strategic plan as a reference in planning, delivering and evaluating their programs and services. This makes it possible for them to address their specific programming requirements while at the same time contributing to the ability of the health unit as a whole to address our collective priorities and improve the quality and length of life in our communities.

Between February and April 2022, all Board of Health members, agency staff, community partners, and members of the public had the chance to provide input into the strategic plan through online surveys, focus groups and key informant interviews. Over 1,100 responses were received through the online survey, with a completion rate of 61.7%.

The input collected through the engagement phase was then synthesized and used to identify priorities and strategic directions to include in the strategic plan. The health unit’s mission, vision and values were validated, the guiding principles updated, and goals and objectives developed for each of the strategic directions.

The Board of Health approved the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan at its October 2022 meeting.



2023-2026 STRATEGY MAP



MISSION
Improve the quality and length of life in our communities: healthy lifestyles, longer lives, lived well.



VISION
We are recognized as a valued and integral partner in health.



VALUES
Respect
Integrity
Equity



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Evidence-informed Practice

Focus for Impact

Listening to the Community

Partnership and Collaboration

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Accessibility



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POPULATION HEALTH

Improve population health outcomes, particularly for those who experience the greatest barriers to health.

Advance priorities on mental health promotion, wellness and addictions.

- Renew the NWHU Mental Health Promotion & Wellness Strategy with input from local stakeholders.
- Improve child and youth mental health and wellness.
- Support the development and implementation of comprehensive harm reduction programming.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Focus our collaborations and relationships with community partners to optimize impact and efficiency.

Contribute population health and equity lenses to the development of health systems in the region.

- Partner with Indigenous public health systems/services.
- Leverage NWHU participation in the Ontario Health Teams to advance population health priorities.
- Become an information source for partners regarding population health information.
- Engage & educate the community on public health issues and the role of NWHU.

AGENCY DEVELOPMENT

Develop creative and innovative approaches to support staff and strengthen agency resiliency, responsiveness, and capacity.

Continually strive to be an Employer of Choice within our region.

- Develop a Human Resources Strategy to support recruitment, retention and a healthy workplace.

Position the agency for service excellence and adaptability.

- Increase staff competencies in cultural humility, anti-racism, trauma-informed practices.
- Strengthen internal communications.
- Embrace technology that supports effective, efficient, equitable and accessible programs.
- Integrate NWHU programs and increase cross-team collaboration to improve effectiveness and responsiveness to community needs.
- Explore strategies to include diverse voices to help inform Board of Health deliberations.

Strategies

Goals

What We'll Do

ABOUT US

Mission

Improve the quality and length of life in our communities: healthy lifestyles, longer lives, lived well.

Vision

We are recognized as a valued and integral partner in health.

Values

RESPECT - We treat all people with respect and dignity, and value diversity and inclusiveness.

INTEGRITY - We act with honesty and adhere to the highest ethical principles as an organization and as public health professionals. We are accountable for our actions and embrace transparency to empower public scrutiny.

EQUITY - We recognize that some people or groups do not have the same opportunities as others for health and success because of systemic discrimination. We actively work to change these policies, practices and structures, internally and in society, to achieve equality of opportunity for all.

	POPULATION HEALTH	PROGRAMS and SERVICES	AGENCY DEVELOPMENT
Strategic Direction	Improve population health outcomes, particularly for those who experience the greatest barriers to health.	Focus our collaborations and relationships with community partners to optimize impact and efficiency.	Develop creative and innovative approaches to support staff and strengthen agency resiliency, responsiveness, and capacity.
Goals	Advance priorities on mental health promotion, wellness and addictions.	Contribute population health and equity lenses to the development of health systems in the region.	Continually strive to be an Employer of Choice within our region. Position the agency for service excellence and adaptability.

DETAILED STRATEGIC PLAN 23-26

POPULATION HEALTH

Strategic Direction: Improve population health outcomes, particularly for those who experience the greatest barriers to health.

Goal: Advance priorities on mental health promotion, wellness and addictions.

Objectives

Renew the NWHU Mental Health Promotion & Wellness Strategy with input from local stakeholders

- Produce mental health & wellness population health report(s) for NWHU
- Engage stakeholders in review / revision of NWHU Mental Health Promotion & Wellness Strategy
- Implement the renewed NWHU Mental Health Promotion & Wellness Strategy

Improve child and youth mental health and wellness

- Complete a child & youth mental health and wellness population health report and review of local services, and develop a plan of action for new or modified NWHU programs based on the findings
- Develop and implement NWHU programs based on the plan of action above

Support the development and implementation of comprehensive harm reduction programming

- Develop a comprehensive communication plan on harm reduction philosophies and harm reduction programming
- Complete a community level needs assessment and evaluation for harm reduction programming
- Enhance opioid overdose and overdose death prevention strategies



PROGRAMS and SERVICES
Strategic Direction: Optimize impact and efficiency by focusing on collaborations and relationships with community partners.
Goal: Contribute population health and equity lenses to the development of health systems in the region.
Objectives
Partner with Indigenous public health systems/services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop inter-agency agreements where appropriate (e.g., data sharing, system) • Participate on committees and coalitions with / about Indigenous public health systems as appropriate
Leverage NWHU participation in the Ontario Health Teams to advance population health priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate on the OHT committee and sub-committees as appropriate • Engage in collaborative planning with the OHTs and individual members
Become an information source for partners regarding population health info
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and distribute population health reports • Post population health data to the NWHU website • Include an equity lens in all NWHU population health reports
Engage & educate the community on public health issues and the role of NWHU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public awareness campaign regarding public health • Participate on local coalitions and networks

AGENCY DEVELOPMENT
Strategic Direction: Develop creative and innovative approaches to support staff and strengthen agency resiliency, responsiveness, and capacity.
Goal: Continually strive to be an Employer of Choice within our region.
Objectives
Develop a Human Resources Strategy to support recruitment, retention & a healthy workplace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate, sustainable and accessible wellness resources and services to staff • Support and maintain a functional Wellness Committee that is representative of the organization (e.g., geography, gender, profession) • Explore strategies to increase employee diversity based on results of the 2022 equity and diversity survey



AGENCY DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Direction: Develop creative and innovative approaches to support staff and strengthen agency resiliency, responsiveness, and capacity

Goal: Position the agency for service excellence and adaptability.

Objectives

Increase staff competencies in cultural humility, anti-racism, trauma-informed practices

- Develop / identify staff training on applicable topics
- Provide staff training

Strengthen internal communications

- Develop an internal communications strategy with objectives and indicators to measure progress
- Develop, modify and/or implement services based on the strategy

Embrace technology that supports effective, efficient, equitable and accessible programs

- Develop an agency technology strategy with objectives and indicators to measure progress
- Develop, modify and/or implement services based on the strategy

Integrate NWHU programs and increase cross-team collaboration to improve effectiveness and responsiveness to community needs

- Explore and advance opportunities for cross team collaboration

Explore strategies to include diverse voices to inform Board of Health deliberations

- Completion of a report on Board diversity opportunities

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan will guide program planning by NWHU teams for the next four years. Key performance indicators at the agency and team levels will be refined and included in a monitoring and evaluation framework to be developed by the end of 2023. Baseline measures will also be collected in 2023 where they do not currently exist.

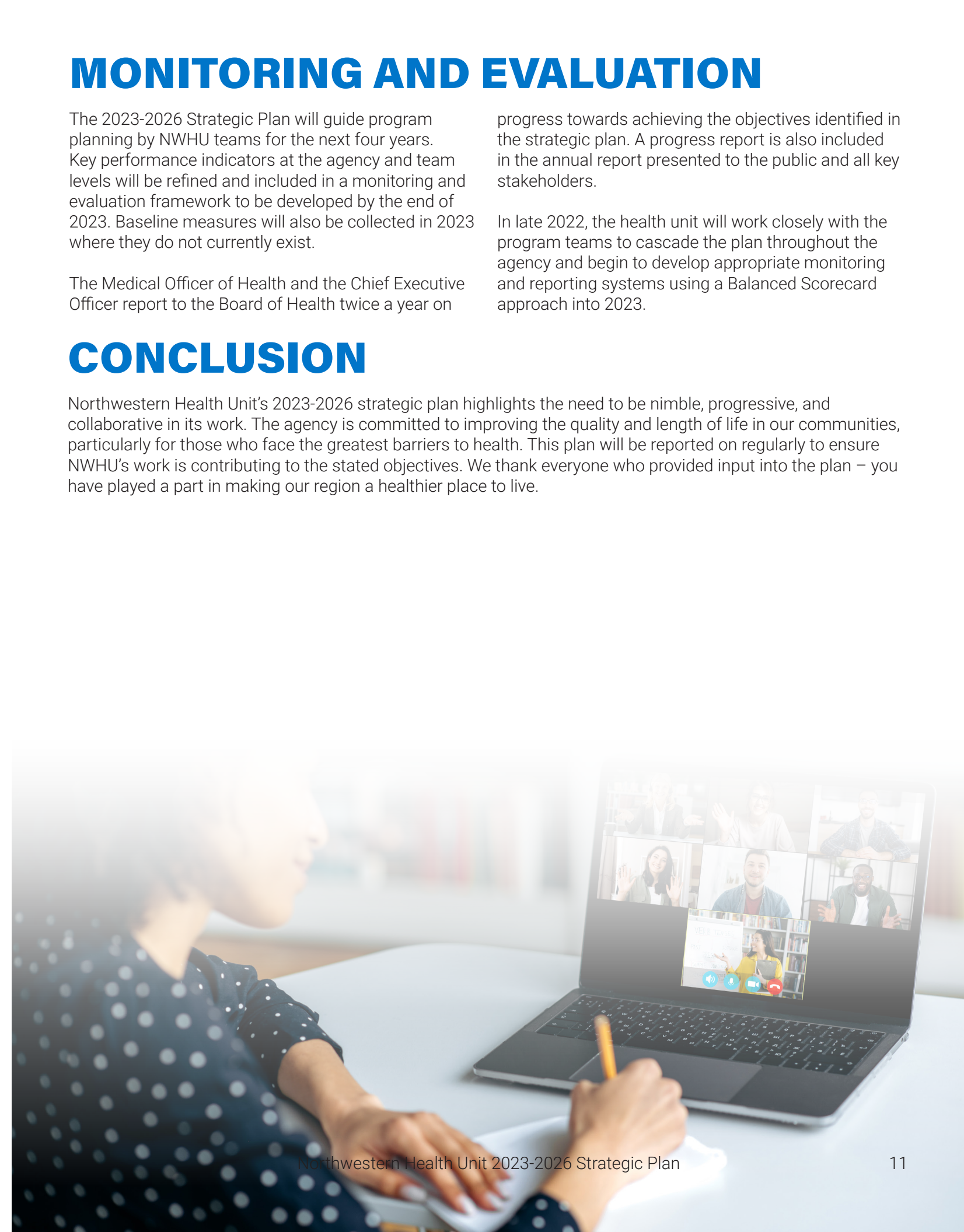
The Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Executive Officer report to the Board of Health twice a year on

progress towards achieving the objectives identified in the strategic plan. A progress report is also included in the annual report presented to the public and all key stakeholders.

In late 2022, the health unit will work closely with the program teams to cascade the plan throughout the agency and begin to develop appropriate monitoring and reporting systems using a Balanced Scorecard approach into 2023.

CONCLUSION

Northwestern Health Unit's 2023-2026 strategic plan highlights the need to be nimble, progressive, and collaborative in its work. The agency is committed to improving the quality and length of life in our communities, particularly for those who face the greatest barriers to health. This plan will be reported on regularly to ensure NWHU's work is contributing to the stated objectives. We thank everyone who provided input into the plan – you have played a part in making our region a healthier place to live.





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