Short-term Strategic Plan
2017 - 2018

Approved by the NWRDC Policy Board on March 3, 2017
Over its 45-year history, Northwest Regional Data Center has successfully accomplished its mission of bringing public sector IT organizations together to achieve cost-effective enterprise levels of service. The past ten years in particular have resulted in significant change and growth, as NWRDC transitioned from being a mainframe service center that provided colocation floor space on the side into a robust service provider and broker with a wide range of services and partnerships. The rapid changes of the technology industry, however, require the data center’s management team to constantly look forward in an effort to plan for the next challenge. This strategic plan outlines NWRDC’s high level initiatives, as well as some of the tasks required to support the subsequent goals.

This plan was developed with considerable input from both NWRDC customers and its Policy Board. Over the last three years, NWRDC has surveyed customers on their thoughts for the future and what they needed NWRDC to be able to provide for their future needs. During this same time frame, sessions were held with the staff to discuss their thoughts on NWRDC’s mission and ways that we could improve. These staff sessions resulted in a new set of Core Principles that serve as our day-to-day guide. The Core Principles were approved by the NWRDC Policy Board and added to our Charter. In November 2015, the Policy Board held a strategic planning session focused on all aspects of the data center’s operations and services. An emphasis was placed on the new Core Principles throughout this session. This plan is a result of all of these efforts.

This plan centers on four strategic initiatives:
1. Recreate the NWRDC brand
2. Become a provider of choice
3. Become an employer of choice
4. Enhance our ability to serve

Our efforts will be directed toward the specific goals detailed for each initiative. A goal is a short-term effort in support of the larger picture defined by the initiative. As work under this plan progresses, new goals may be identified in support of the overall initiatives. Annual addendums will be presented to the Policy Board to enhance and extend this strategic plan until the initiatives are successfully completed.

As our strategic planning efforts develop, we will require more involvement from YOU. Whether you are a customer, Board member, employee, vendor/partner, or just an interested party, we will need your feedback. NWRDC is an organization centered on service and this plan represents our desire to enrich our services. Thank you for your interest in our center’s future. As always, we look forward to working with you!
NWRDC Customers by Region

Northwest
Holmes County School District, Bonifay
Calhoun County School District, Blountstown
Liberty County School District, Bristol
PAEC, Chipley
Wakulla County School District, Crawfordville
Walton County School District, DeFuniak Springs
Franklin County School District, Eastpoint
ELC of Okaloosa & Walton Counties, Ft. Walton Beach
Chipola College, Marianna
Santa Rosa County School District, Milton
Jefferson County School District, Monticello
Bay County School District, Panama City
Escambia County School District, Pensacola
Pensacola State College, Pensacola
University of West Florida, Pensacola
Gulf County School District, Port St. Joe
Gadsden County School District, Quincy

Tallahassee:
Florida Board of Governors
Agency for State Technology
Department of Business & Professional Regulation
Department of Education
Department of Financial Services
Department of Health
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
Department of Insurance and Treasury
Department of Revenue
Department of State
Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
FAMU Developmental Research School
Florida Center for Interactive Media
Florida Office of Early Learning
Florida State University
Florida State University Schools
FSU Facilities
FSU Foundation
FSU Police Department
LearnSomething, Inc.
Leon County Schools
Statewide Guardian ad Litem
Tallahassee Memorial Health Care

West Central
Florida Polytechnic University, Lakeland
Pinellas County School Board, Largo
Hillsborough County Clerk of Courts, Tampa
Hillsborough County School District, Tampa
University of South Florida, Tampa
Polk State College, Winter Haven

Southwest
Manatee County Schools, Bradenton
Florida Gulf Coast University, Ft. Myers
Lee County School District, Ft. Myers
New College of Florida, Sarasota
Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota

South
A.D. Henderson University School, Boca Raton
Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton
St. Thomas University, Miami
Florida International University, Miami

Northeast
Nassau County School District, Fernandina Beach
Santa Fe College, Gainesville
University of Florida, Gainesville
City of Jacksonville
Florida State College of Jacksonville
University of North Florida, Jacksonville
Suwannee County School District, Live Oak
Madison County School District, Madison
Taylor County School District, Perry
Bradford County School District, Starke
Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, St. Augustine
St. Johns County School District, St. Augustine

East Central
Orlando:
Orange County Clerk of Courts
Orange County Government
University of Central Florida

Southeast
Palm Beach State College, Lake Worth
Palm Beach County Health Care District, Palm Springs
Martin County Government, Stuart

West Palm Beach:
15th Judicial Circuit of Palm Beach County
Palm Beach County Clerk and Comptroller
Palm Beach County School District
Palm Beach County Government
Throughout its history, NWRDC has been known for its mainframe and colocation services. In the last 6 years though, NWRDC has been reinventing itself to become a full service cloud provider with services and infrastructure that are comparable to any large provider. We are still seen, however, as just a mainframe/colocation provider. In order to be competitive and provide the maximum benefit to our member-customers, they need to have that same level of confidence in our new services that they have in our historical services.

Goals

A. Build Confidence in Services (relates to P1, P2, P4, P7, P9. See Appendix A.)

- **Organization certifications:** To inspire confidence, we need to prove what we can do. Inviting reviews by third party organizations such as Uptime Institute, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and Cloud Security Alliance, and completing their certification processes will help improve our marketability.

- **Third-party audit:** NWRDC is already audited by the Florida Auditor General and as part of our member-customers’ audits. A third-party review based on something similar to the Statement on Standards for Attestation Engagements (SSAE)16 for service organizations and its Service Organization Controls (SOC) would show the maturity of the center’s services and our ability to meet customer requirements.

- **Staff certifications:** As NWRDC has grown and developed new services, our need for expertise in new technologies has also grown. Therefore, NWRDC has an ongoing training program to help keep our staff knowledgeable of new technologies. Achieving certifications in our various levels of responsibilities gives our member-customers a greater level of confidence in our team’s ability to meet their needs.

- **Improve risk management process:** A large portion of NWRDC’s responsibilities revolve around managing risk. Further examining our own internal risk management process will help identify areas where we need to improve.

B. Prove Our Business Value (P2, P3, P4, P6, P7)

One of the tenets of NWRDC is that we are better off working together than separately. As we design a service, we strive to make sure that the service costs decrease as more member-customers use it. However, we have not always tracked that information to make sure we are accomplishing this as efficiently as possible or publicizing the resulting cost savings.
• NWRDC will develop case studies on our cost effectiveness. We will work together with our member-customers to establish a “before and after” analysis of their costs to show the ways by which using NWRDC has benefited their organization either financially or operationally.

• Every year, NWRDC pushes forward new projects to improve our service environment. While we track the budget impact of each project and how it affects our rate structure, we do not fully examine the total picture once the project is completed. NWRDC will begin tracking projects post-completion in order to determine their true total impact, including the return of investment for our member-customers.

Even if NWRDC were to be the greatest service provider in the world, it would not matter if potential member-customers are unaware of our data center. NWRDC’s marketing efforts in the past have mostly relied on word-of-mouth, but that does not help us effectively reach out into new markets and potential member-customers.

**Goals**

**A. Marketing Plan** (P2, P4, P7, P9)
NWRDC will develop a three-year marketing plan that will include outreach as a primary component. Rather than waiting for member-customers to come to us, we will be more proactive in finding ways to reach out to them directly.

**B. Expand Staff Visibility** (P5, P6, P7, P8)
The Executive Director has actively participated in organizations such as FAEDS, EDUCAUSE, TalTech, etc. We have not necessarily encouraged our staff to do so. This unfortunately gives our member-customers a very narrow view of the depth of our overall organization. We will begin efforts to ensure more staff involvement in these presentation opportunities. This will allow us to participate in more events, provide participants with a deeper view into the NWRDC organization, and give our staff experience in representing NWRDC at a new level.

When an organization signs on to use NWRDC, their business processes become dependent on our staff for their operations. As such, we need to ensure that we have the best and brightest staff available. This initiative will be achieved on two fronts. First, we must be as
competitive as possible in our recruiting efforts. While our salary pool will need to be competitive, we will also need to detail the total compensation package to prospective employees. Secondly, we need to enable a training program to keep existing employees' knowledge and skillsets current.

**Goals**

**A. Develop a Detailed Compensation Plan** (P5, P6, P8)

In conjunction with FSU Human Resources, we will develop a recruitment document that details the benefits of working at FSU and NWRDC.

**B. Professional Development** (P2, P5, P8)

In order to aid employees in advancing their knowledge and skills, we will develop a program that requires employees to complete a minimum amount of training. This will be detailed in their position descriptions as well as NWRDC policy. As part of the program, in-house training opportunities will be offered in addition to our existing external training programs. Staff will also be provided with dedicated time for study and professional development. We will also make sure they have access to multiple training programs that allow them to train in a manner best suited to meet their needs. For example, some employees may prefer classroom training, while others may prefer an individualized, online type of program.

**C. Management Training** (P2, P5, P8)

In addition to their areas of technical expertise, managers need to develop their skills in areas such as communication, leadership, finance, and team building. NWRDC will create a training program for its junior managers to assist in developing their leadership skills. NWRDC will investigate programs such as EDUCAUSE, Gartner and other organizations for staff development options centering on leadership training.

**Initiative IV: Enhance Our Ability to Serve**

NWRDC needs to find ways to improve service for both new and existing member-customers. We will look for ways to improve both our business service processes, as well as those for our technology and support services.

**Goals**

**A. Make it Easier to Procure Services** (P1, P3, P4)

NWRDC will investigate ways to streamline its ordering process to allow for member-customers to procure services from NWRDC in an easier manner. Examples of this may include a cloud management portal to allow for member-customer sites to integrate
directly with NWRDC service offerings. NWRDC will also seek to improve its onboarding process. Historically, each member-customer's needs have been diverse, therefore each onboarding project has been drastically different. NWRDC will investigate ways to better standardize this process, yet still allowing for member-customer specific planning.

B. **Continue Development of the Formal Project Management Process** (P1, P2, P6, P9)
As mentioned earlier, the varying needs of our member-customers have resulted in a non-standard project management methodology. Over the last year, NWRDC’s management team has worked to develop a standard method of identifying and categorizing projects. Each project is defined in a formal project charter. In the last few months, the charter process has been expanded to include member-customer approval of the project charter. In the coming year, NWRDC will seek to include more detailed project planning in support of the current charter process. Through this, we hope to achieve better member-customer communication and participation in the project planning process. We also hope to gather better data on our projects, which will help us develop more accurate plans and timelines in the future.

C. **Develop New Partnerships with the Vendor Community** (P1, P2, P3, P4)
NWRDC’s public-private partnerships have resulted in significant success for the organization and have helped reduce costs. By working to add new partnerships to our service catalog in the coming year, NWRDC can become a one-stop shop for cloud, security, and professional services. We will continue our efforts to expand partnerships for the disaster recovery and cloud markets, as well as investigate possible partnerships in non-traditional markets.
1. Provide a secure, enterprise-class computing environment that meets our member-customers’ needs.

2. Deliver consistent, best-in-class support by managing, resolving, and preventing problems efficiently, communicating effectively and exceeding member-customer expectations.

3. Engineer flexible approaches.

4. Reduce costs and overhead by consolidating technology solutions for all member-customers.

5. Build and retain a diverse team of highly skilled and motivated staff.

6. Foster a results-oriented, collaborative atmosphere.

7. Establish positive relationships with our member-customers through open communication and continuous feedback.

8. Create an environment that nurtures staff members’ professional and personal growth.

9. Strive to make every member-customer interaction a positive one.
Achieve, Preserve, Avoid, Eliminate
As developed during the Policy Board’s November, 2015 strategic planning retreat.

A. Achieve

1. Be the provider of choice
2. Become employer of choice for high-quality IT staff
3. Ease of service provisioning and lower costs
4. Streamline service delivery process
5. Growth in sectors other than traditional
6. Flexible provisioning of virtual resources to support rapid response and prototyping
7. Expand Cloud Services
8. Predictable and repeatable processes for budgeting/payment/startup of new services
9. Agile services
10. End-to-End service (infrastructure, disaster recovery, backup continuity)
11. Project Management (structured approach)
12. Clear SLAs and accountability to them
13. Full conversion to services
14. Cross-discipline staff expertise
15. Marketing of services, value proposition, and expertise/experience

P. Preserve

1. Staff knowledge
2. Personalized and flexible services
3. Customer-led governance
4. Ease of procurement
5. One-stop support for infrastructure
6. Trust and partnership with customers and vendors
7. Collaboration between members/clients
8. Cooperative nature of engagement with NWRDC and new services
9. Responsiveness
10. Mainframe Services
11. Colocation business partner
12. Budget balance

V. Avoid
1. Relying on state mandates to capture customers
2. Losing customers to lower cost models
3. Overly constricting available services compared to other data center providers
4. Security breaches or DR failures
5. Obsolescence/irrelevance of technology
6. Budget shortfalls and AR
7. Unnecessary overhead costs
8. Capital expenditure (CAPEX)
9. Reverting to procurement of equipment and Data Center Operations Hosted Solutions operated by DOE
10. Unresolved customer issues
E. Eliminate

1. High level of staff turnover
2. Delays in technology projects
3. Budget shortfalls in projects
4. Eliminate or limit number of support lines (i.e. more cloud-like)
5. Unnecessary costs (capital/facilities)
6. Delays through automation
7. Variances in services/ low performing services
8. Mainframe Services (outsource to another provider)
9. Hard-to-understand cost models