



Natural Resource Management

Framework 2021 - 2026



Local Land
Services



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More information

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing June 2021. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.



The natural resource management challenge

A healthy environment is vital to the productivity of our agriculture sector, the wellbeing of our rural and urban communities, and the connection of Aboriginal people to culture and Country.

Yet the health of our environment is under increasing strain and will be further stretched by the expected increases in droughts, floods, bushfires and other climatic changes. In New South Wales (NSW) five major ecosystems are at imminent risk of collapseⁱ; the number of species at risk of extinction is continuing to rise; native vegetation is under increasing pressure from fragmentation, invasive species, altered fire regimes, changing land use and land availability, overgrazing and climate change; waterways are under pressure from riparian vegetation clearing, diffuse source water pollution, and invasive species; and the capacity of soils to sustain a range of productive land uses and support natural ecosystems in the long term is at risk from declining soil condition across the stateⁱⁱ.

Natural resource management is the integrated management of the natural resources that make up Australia's landscapes, such as land, water, soil, plants and animals. It recognises that people and their livelihoods

rely on the health and productivity of our landscapes, and their actions as stewards of the land play a critical role in maintaining this health and productivityⁱⁱⁱ.

Local Land Services' Natural Resource Management (NRM) services support and enable land managers to better manage these natural resources - avoiding or reversing their decline, and maintaining land uses that are sustainable and productive.

Without our NRM services, NSW would see continued decline in soil health, water quality, and native vegetation condition, resulting in loss of agricultural productivity, tourism and community wellbeing, and loss of species, ecosystems and the ecosystem services we all rely on. If our natural resources continue on their current path of degradation, there will be significant costs to the economy and welfare of all Australians. Natural resources are very expensive, or often impossible, to replace or return to a healthy state.

The NSW Government recognises these challenges, as such, Local Land Services' NRM services are aimed at achieving the State Outcome "Productive and Sustainable Land Use".

ⁱ Bergstrom DM, Wienecke BC, Hoff J, et al. Combating ecosystem collapse from the tropics to the Antarctic. *Glob Change Biol.* 2021;00:1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.15539>

ⁱⁱ NSW State of the Environment, 2018 www.soe.epa.nsw.gov.au

ⁱⁱⁱ NRM Regions Australia and NSW Natural Resources Commission



What are we aiming to achieve through our NRM services?

Over the last two decades, Local Land Services' NRM services (and those of its predecessors) have been instrumental in changing the norms around productive agriculture and sustainable land use.

As we enter a more carbon-constrained and rapidly-changing decade, we are reshaping our NRM services to meet the opportunities and challenges presented by:

- New environmental markets, increasing community expectations for natural resource stewardship, and emerging models for valuing natural capital
- Emerging applications of behavioural sciences to land management practice change
- Long overdue recognition of the role of Aboriginal land management practices in contemporary natural resource management
- More frequent and intense extreme weather events requiring ongoing focus on landscape recovery and resilience, and the corresponding need to support land managers and natural resources prepare for ongoing climate change impacts
- And organisationally, the imperatives to service an increasingly diverse customer base, streamline our services as One-LLS, tightly target our limited resources for greater impact, and adapt to new entrants in a busy NRM space.

This framework clarifies the strategic direction for our NRM services for 2021 to 2026. It outlines the key priorities for our NRM services to respond to these challenges and contribute to productive and sustainable land use across NSW. These priorities are set out in five Objectives and their associated Key Results and Initiatives.

Our goals and objectives

State outcomes and indicators*

Productive and sustainable land use

State program*

Enabling land managers to better manage natural resources

NRM Services aspirational goal

By 2026, 80 per cent of our customers receiving our NRM services have adopted improved NRM practices on their properties

1

Driving practice change through customer-centred NRM services

2

Helping land managers get a return from NRM

3

Tackling the priority threats to achieving healthy and resilient landscapes

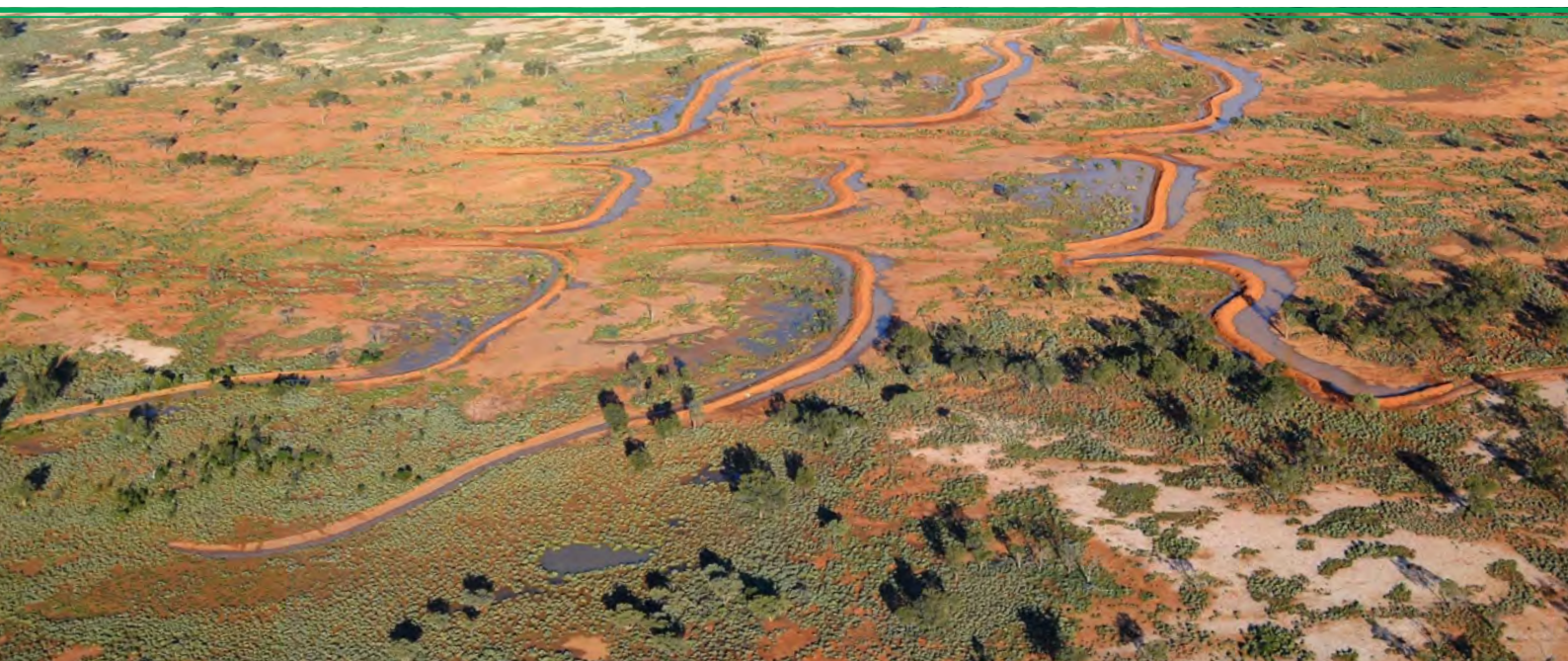
4

Supporting Aboriginal land managers to care for Country

5

Becoming service provider of choice and trusted broker of partnerships

* From the Department of Regional NSW Outcome and Business Plan. See diagram on final page of this Framework for the metrics that are used to assess performance against the State Outcome.





Our role

The NRM and environment sector is a busy space with many government and non-government organisations playing a role, often with duplication and overlap, making it confusing for our customers and our investors.

Local Land Services is clear about its niche within NRM in NSW. We believe that we make the greatest impact and have the most unique roles to play in:

Direct Action and Investment

Delivering NRM practice change, through:

- Demonstration and extension services
- Advice and information to land managers
- Implementing on-ground interventions.

Partnership and Connection

Delivering outcomes at scale, through:

- Collaborations & partnerships across private and public land
- Coordination of effort locally and statewide
- Connections to our 250,000 customers.

Our delivery commitments

Customer Outcome-focused – delivery for our customers and the people of NSW, not process-focused

High Impact – investment in the services and issues that realise the greatest impact on achieving healthy landscapes

Integration - linking NRM services with all other core services

Partnering – across tenures, groups and organisations

Accountability – inspiring confidence through robust governance and transparency

Evidence-based – having confidence that our interventions will work based on scientific evidence or experience. If we are experimenting we will do it with our eyes open and capture learnings along the way

Adaptive – our NRM services will change in response to what we learn and as social, economic and environmental conditions change



Our value

Local Land Services' NRM services create value for:

Our customers

Private land managers

- Primary producers or farmers
- Hobby or lifestyle land managers
- Aboriginal land managers
- >2ha land managers
- Corporate land managers

Public land managers

eg. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Crown Lands, Local Government

Our stakeholders

Investors/funding bodies

Organisations for whom we provide services and deliver programs, on their behalf eg. NSW Govt agencies, Australian Govt agencies

Partners

Organisations/groups we work with to provide services and implement programs eg. Landcare, Local Aboriginal Land Councils

Beneficiaries

People of NSW, the environment and its natural and cultural resources

Local Land Services is clear about the value it creates for its customers. We believe that our highest customer-value services include:

- Advice tailored to a customer's values, goals, needs, problems and land management context – a whole-property approach, ensuring follow-up
- Developing and supporting networks, groups and social processes to bring about change
- Connecting customers to local examples and contemporary information and that demonstrate the environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits of NRM practices, and where evidence doesn't exist, partnering with organisations who hold it or can generate it
- Connecting customers to market-based schemes, stewardship schemes and certification schemes, that improve the return from NRM
- Carefully targeted grants, where there is a demonstrated need for financial incentives to catalyse change
- Partnerships with customers' trusted advisors and information sources such as agronomists and research and development corporations
- Seamless, coordinated and responsive interactions with our services
- Facilitating coordinated action and informing state and national NRM initiatives and policy.

Driving practice change through customer-centred NRM services

We have always known that natural resource management is more of a social and cultural challenge than a technical challenge. Despite this, much of the way we design and deliver our services is still guided by our own or our investors' requirements.

Increasingly within government, there is a growing imperative to shift toward true customer-centric service delivery – in NRM, this means that we design our services and apply the most appropriate practice change approaches by understanding our customers' values,

aspirations and motivations, understanding the social context within which they operate, and identifying how we can improve their interactions with our services. The application of behavioural science, agricultural adoption theory, and behavioural economics can help us tailor our services to our unique customers and to increase our impact beyond what we can achieve with our traditional tools. Partnerships with Landcare groups and other local groups will be critical for success in this area.

Objective 1

To drive widespread NRM practice adoption by understanding and addressing our customers' social and behavioural drivers.

Key result 1.1: Our NRM services are aimed at reducing the barriers and strengthening the enablers of NRM practice adoption, and are tailored to customers' specific needs and desired outcomes, *as measured by NRM customer satisfaction and net promoter scores*

Key result 1.2: Our customers are empowered to seize opportunities arising from change, and to manage natural resources to adapt to change, *as measured by increases in knowledge and skills*

Key result 1.3: Our customers increasingly adopt sustainable natural resource management practices, *as measured by area of improved practices*

Actions and initiatives

1.a Apply behavioural science, human-centred design and customer segmentation approaches when developing NRM practice change programs (eg customer journey mapping)

1.b Establish demonstrations of NRM practices in a diverse range of local settings, so that land managers can observe proof of economic, social and environmental outcomes

1.c Support and increase visibility of champions and credible local leaders already adopting NRM, through active support of land manager networks and groups, such as Landcare and communities of practice

1.d Provide whole-property planning and advisory services that integrate NRM into day-to-day farm operations

1.e Develop, in collaboration with customers, 'Service Standards' for NRM services, including a procedure for customer follow-up

1.f Deliver services aimed at building land manager capacity to manage environmental change, in particular climate change, and make informed decisions in NRM





Helping land managers get a return from NRM

Emerging markets and schemes for carbon and biodiversity, natural capital valuation, demand for premium, sustainable produce and increasing interest from the community in the environmental impacts of farming are driving opportunities for realising economic returns from the adoption of NRM practices.

For many land managers, the perceived economic benefit or financial gain of an NRM practice is an important driver of adoption. Whilst this is not always the case, for those for whom it is, Local Land Services has a role to provide

information and general advice on evidence-based environmental markets and to help farmers and land managers win greater trust, market share and premium prices for sustainably produced produce, while improving the natural resource base.

This part of the framework is aimed at helping our customers realise an economic return, commercial advantage or other financial reward from the adoption of best-practice NRM.

Objective 2

To help our customers realise returns from adoption of improved NRM practices

Key result 2.1: Increased engagement of land managers in extension and advisory services that enable customer participation in carbon, biodiversity, or other environmental goods and services markets (and other relevant schemes), *as measured by number of land managers engaged in environmental markets programs and advisory services*

Key result 2.2: Our customers are increasing their understanding, awareness and willingness to trial or adopt evidence-based NRM practices that have both environmental and economic/financial benefits, *as measured by increases in knowledge and attitudes*

Key result 2.3: Our customers increasingly adopt sustainable natural resource management practices, *as measured by area of improved practices*

Actions and initiatives

2.a Pilot new programs and services where Local Land Services plays an intermediary role between customers and emerging markets (eg biodiverse carbon services), and assess success and feasibility for broader delivery

2.b Establish an environmental markets extension and advisory program, to help our customers identify opportunities from, and participate in, new and emerging environmental markets, and develop staff and organisational capacity in this area.

2.c Explore opportunities for Local Land Services service provider role in environmental stewardship schemes, potentially including outcomes certification or environmental accounting services

2.d Build strategic partnerships with environmental market players to demonstrate and make it easier for small landholdings to connect to and participate in these markets

2.e As part of agricultural and NRM services, deliver advice and extension that incorporates diversification of income streams, carbon planning and biodiversity markets

2.f Provide extension and information services on the economic benefits derived from investing in conservation and restoration of natural resources and landscapes, and connect

Tackling the priority threats to achieving healthy and resilient landscapes

Through direct action and investment, Local Land Services supports land managers to adopt evidence-based NRM practices that are aimed at reducing or removing threats to achieving healthy resilient landscapes. Through partnership and connection, we bring people and organisations together to prioritise management of the greatest threats and increase the scale of effort in tackling those threats.

Whilst the priorities vary amongst regions and land management systems, overall, some of the most effective ways of tackling the top threats to landscapes include:

- maintenance of minimum levels of groundcover and vegetation cover, and construction of vegetative or other structures to reduce runoff and improve soil condition
- strategic restoration, revegetation and better management of intact native vegetation to improve its resilience and safeguard habitat for plant and animal species (using genetically diverse, local and climate-adjusted species)
- restoration and better management of the riparian zone of rivers, wetlands and estuaries for improved water quality and flood resilience
- rehabilitation of gully and streambank erosion
- control of invasive species and diseases
- protecting sites that will act as climate change refuges
- managing native vegetation for conservation purposes
- the introduction of land management practices such as grazing pressure management, mixed-species pastures, effluent and fertiliser management.



Objective 3

To take action on the top threats to the health and resilience of NSW landscapes and catchments

Key result 3.1: Our customers are improving and restoring native vegetation (enhancing habitat quality, connectivity and biodiversity), *as measured by area of native vegetation enhanced, rehabilitated or protected*

Key result 3.2: Our customers are rehabilitating waterways and their riparian zones in high priority catchment areas, *as measured by stream length river/estuary enhanced, rehabilitated or protected and area of wetlands enhanced, rehabilitated or protected*

Key result 3.3: Our customers are maximising ground/vegetative cover (as a surrogate for improving soil and waterway health and reducing erosion, flood and drought risk), *as measured by increased year-round groundcover/vegetation cover in priority areas of the state*

Key result 3.4: Our customers are engaged in best practice weed, pest and disease management, reducing the impact of invasive species and diseases on environmental values, *as measured by percent of landholders engaged (or area) in best practice invasive species management*

Actions and initiatives

3.a Identify targets and priority areas across the state for the highest return-on-investment in: native vegetation management; riparian management, groundcover management; and environmental biosecurity

3.b Deliver targeted threat and pressure minimisation programs and projects that arrest decline in natural resources

3.c Deliver integrated land management practice change programs, landscape scale rehabilitation activities and riparian land management programs in priority catchments, coordinating action and investment of agencies, industry and land managers

3.d Facilitate greater integration of environmental outcomes in regional pest and weed plans and programs through review of regional pest and weed plans in 2022 and 2023, and increase collaboration with bio-security teams on environmental biosecurity

3.e Provide whole-of-property assessment and planning services to match land use and management to land suitability

3.f Deliver information, advice and extension to land managers that helps to prepare their properties and natural resources for natural disasters and emergencies, and adapt to climate change



Supporting Aboriginal Land Managers to care for Country

Local Land Services holds a longstanding commitment to meaningful engagement with Aboriginal people and communities across NSW.

Aboriginal people and communities own and manage large areas of land in NSW and are therefore key customers of our NRM services. Aboriginal businesses and communities are potential delivery partners for our on-ground NRM services. In addition, non-Aboriginal land managers have much to learn from traditional land management practices to enhance contemporary land management.

The Local Land Services Aboriginal Engagement Strategy outlines the ways that Local Land Services will enrich relationships, create opportunities and enhance respect for Aboriginal peoples and communities for all our services. This part of the NRM Framework clarifies the specific objective, results and initiatives for NRM services in implementing the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy.

Objective 4

To champion opportunities for Aboriginal people and communities to care for Country and enhance contemporary land management practices

Key result 4.1: Our NRM programs are increasing Aboriginal community partnerships and participation within service delivery and decisions, leading to increased Aboriginal employment and/or Aboriginal-owned business procurement, *as measured by the number of specific programs that involve Aboriginal people and communities in NRM*

Key result 4.2: Increased number of opportunities for Aboriginal people and other land managers to promote, showcase and share traditional and contemporary land management knowledge and practices, including cultural fire practices, while ensuring the protection of cultural rights and knowledge, *as measured by area of improved practices*

Actions and initiatives

4.a All projects adhere to due diligence processes from the Local Land Services Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Handbook within regions' NRM business systems and processes

4.b Utilise Aboriginal Community Advisory Groups or other engagement platforms such as Landcare NSW to understand community aspirations and inform NRM program design

4.c Preference Aboriginal-owned business procurement for on-ground works, in support of Aboriginal Engagement Strategy target of >3%

4.g Work with Aboriginal land managers to identify cultural heritage impacted by climate change and options for protection and better management

4.d Broker partnerships between Green Teams/ Aboriginal Land Management Teams and other parties (eg councils) to improve access to equipment, infrastructure, machinery, and provide project management capacity building where possible

4.e Support upskilling of Aboriginal workforce in Traditional Owner organisations and Local Aboriginal Land Councils in NRM, through scholarships and training assistance

4.f NRM staff collaborate with Aboriginal Communities Officers early in NRM project development to plan activities such as cultural burning and cultural site assessments

Becoming the NSW NRM service provider of choice

Local Land Services is seen by many government and non-government investors as an obvious provider of services to engage land managers and deliver on-ground outcomes. This is because of our: customer base of around 250,000 land managers; 800 experienced and qualified staff across 100 towns offering real world, whole-property and integrated solutions to NRM, agriculture, biosecurity and emergency management challenges; knowledge and expertise in practice change; and tenure neutral approach.

Whilst the Australian Government regularly invests in NRM through Local Land Services regions, there are opportunities to improve Local Land Services' position as a service provider of choice with NSW Government agencies and other non-government investors. There are also opportunities to strengthen our unique role in NRM partnership brokering and collaboration by more appropriately valuing and measuring the coordination and connection activities that are crucial to achieving outcomes at scale.

Objective 5

To be the NRM service provider of choice and a trusted broker of NRM partnerships

Key result 5.1: Our investors and partners are increasingly confident in Local Land Services, *as measured by increased revenue for NRM services, and increased investor and partner satisfaction*

Key result 5.2: Our enabling functions such as partnership brokering and collaboration are highly valued, and are supporting the delivery of the state outcome, *as measured by increases in the proportion of NRM funds allocated to collaboration and engagement activities*

Actions and initiatives

5.a Enhance NRM marketing and communications - include NRM value proposition and niche in all communications, wider and better promotion of impact, develop NRM capability statement and suite of flagship NRM projects for investors	5.b Develop standardised costings for staff to undertake brokering/engagement functions, build partnership development and collaboration costs into all project budgets, and capture collaboration outcomes in reporting	5.c Develop and foster formal collaboration agreements for priority partnerships, in particular for catchment coordination activities	5.d Build staff capacity to deliver new focus areas in NRM services (eg environmental markets, climate change advice, customer-centred design, collaboration & facilitation)
5.e Ensure annual work plans include staff time for collaborative activities (not just outputs)	5.f Improve our performance monitoring and outcomes evaluation framework and tools that enable us to quantify and/or model the impact of Local Land Services NRM services, including investment leverage	5.g Implement process to monitor partner and investor satisfaction, benchmarking current performance as service provider of choice	5.h Increase proportion of program funds allocated to monitoring and evaluation, evidence gathering, and adaptive approaches



NRM Framework Implementation

This framework guides, and will be implemented through, all NRM services within Local Land Services regions and within all funding sources. Some initiatives requiring development of a state-wide approach will be led by the Portfolio Lead and Business Partner – NRM with the NRM Statewide Advisory Group.

An Implementation Plan will be developed to clarify responsibilities and timing for implementation.

Governance

The Executive Director, Regional Operations, is accountable for the delivery of this framework.

The NRM Portfolio Lead and Business Partner are responsible for championing the implementation of this framework, and for developing frameworks that standardise implementation and reporting across the regions and Regional General Managers are responsible for implementing relevant actions (as will be noted in the Implementation Plan).

The NRM SWAG is the key advisory group for advancing several of the actions that will require statewide strategic and/or consistent approaches.

Monitoring implementation

The Portfolio Lead and Business Partner will monitor and report on implementation of actions and initiatives annually.

The Portfolio Lead and Business Partner will formally review progress against the key results after two years, in 2023. The diagram on the following page summarises the performance metrics for this NRM Framework.

Regional NRM Planning

All Local Land Services regions are currently updating or developing Regional NRM Plans as required by the Australian Government under National Landcare Program obligations.

It is expected that regions will align their Regional NRM Plan with the directions in this statewide NRM Framework.

DRNSW Outcome and Business Plan

State
outcome

State
program

PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE LANDUSE

Enabling our land managers to better
manage our natural resources

Increased engagement of land managers in Local Land
Services programs relating to NRM
Land manager recommendation of Local Land Services to their
friends for services relating to NRM
Area of improved land manager practices

Local Land Services customer satisfaction score
Number of training and awareness events
Area (ha) of threatened species, populations or ecological communities
enhanced, rehabilitated or protected
Stream length (km) river/estuary enhanced, rehabilitated or protected
Area (ha) of land managed for improved soil condition
Area (ha) of wetlands enhanced, rehabilitated or protected
Area (ha) of native vegetation enhanced, rehabilitated or protected

Strategy

Performance Metrics

NRM
Goal

By 2026, 80 per cent of our customers receiving our NRM services have
adopted improved NRM practices on their properties

Area of improved land manager practices
Number of customers adopting improved NRM practices

1. To drive widespread NRM practice adoption by understanding and
addressing our customers' social and behavioural drivers

Local Land Services customer satisfaction score
Land manager recommendation (Net Promoter Score)
Knowledge and skills
Area of improved land manager practices

2. To help our customers realise returns from adoption of improved
NRM practices

Engagement of land managers in programs and services
Knowledge and skills
Area of improved land manager practices

3. To take action on the top threats to the health and resilience of NSW
landscapes and catchments

Area of native vegetation enhanced, rehabilitated or protected
Stream length of river/estuary enhanced, rehabilitated or protected
Area (ha) of wetlands enhanced, rehabilitated or protected
Groundcover/vegetation cover in priority areas
Engagement of land managers in programs and services

4. To champion opportunities for Aboriginal people and
communities to care for Country and enhance contemporary land
management practices

Number of programs involving Aboriginal people and communities
Area of improved land manager practices

5. To be the NRM service provider of choice and a trusted broker of
NRM partnerships

Proportional revenue for NRM services
Level of investor and partner satisfaction
Proportional funding for collaboration & engagement activities

Local Land Services NRM Framework

NRM
Objectives



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