

Direct International Registration and Licensing (DIRL)
Project Evaluation Report (Interim)

November 1st, 2023 - April 30th, 2024

**NOVA SCOTIA
COLLEGE OF
NURSING**



Introduction

As Nova Scotia's nursing regulator, the Nova Scotia College of Nursing's (NSCN) role is to ensure that all nurses providing nursing services for Nova Scotians are qualified to do so. The public can depend on NSCN to license those who meet registration requirements and demonstrate they have the knowledge, skills, and competence required to safely and ethically practice as a nurse.

On May 1, 2023, NSCN implemented a new first-in-Canada approach to registration and licensure that aims to establish a fast and predictable pathway to licensure in our province. Registered nurses who demonstrate good standing and good character and are licensed in Canada, the Philippines, India, Nigeria, USA, UK, Australia, or New Zealand, are eligible for NSCN's expedited registration and licensure process. Using an equity lens, the newly developed approach yields consistent and predictable licensing outcomes for nurses educated in Nova Scotia, Canada, as well as the seven specific countries where 87% of NSCN's international applicants traditionally apply from.

The expedited licensing process is intended to ensure a direct and efficient approach to licensing international nurses from designated countries and increase the number of qualified nurses available for the Nova Scotia health system.

Evaluation Framework

As a relational regulator and in keeping with NSCN's values of accountability and transparency, it is important that we make evidence-informed decisions and are accountable and responsible for those decisions. A formal evaluation of NSCN's direct international registration and licensing process provides a systematic method to study our decisions, identify what is working well and what could be improved.

The logic model framework will evaluate:

- a) The regulatory processes used to implement the expedited registration and licensure process
- b) The number of international nurse license holders in Nova Scotia after May 1, 2023
- c) Any potential unintended regulatory impacts

The following questions will provide the context for the evaluation framework:

1. Has the expedited registration and licensure process resulted in more nurses available in the NS health system?
2. Has the expedited registration and licensure process resulted in any unintended regulatory impacts?
3. What evidence is there that the expedited registrant and licensure process has impacted the actual numbers of nurses available within the system?

Periodic evaluations are planned at six-month intervals over the next 12 months, with a final evaluation on May 1, 2025. Interim reports will be issued after each evaluation interval and compiled into a final report, including recommendations in June 2025.

Consultation Tools and Data Sources

Data is being collected from the following sources:

- **NSCN Registrant Portal.** The portal provides registration information, including the total number of registrants and NCLEX pass rates.
- **NSCN Website Analytics.** The website analytics provides the number of unique visits to NSCN website pages, including registration and practice support tools.
- **NSCN Practice Database.** The database provides the numbers and types of practice consultations offered by NSCN Practice Consultants.

- **Verification of Registration Requests Tracking Tool.** This tracking tool provides the number of ‘verification of registration’ requests received from registrants applying through the expedited registration and licensure process.
- **Nova Scotia Health Learning Institute for Health Care Providers.** The Institute provides evidence of the number of registrants referred to the RN Bridging program.
- **Online Registrant Survey.** This survey was used to obtain feedback from applicants who applied through NSCN’s expedited registration and licensure process. The survey was open for three weeks and had a 54% response rate.

Results

This section of the report is framed around our research questions.

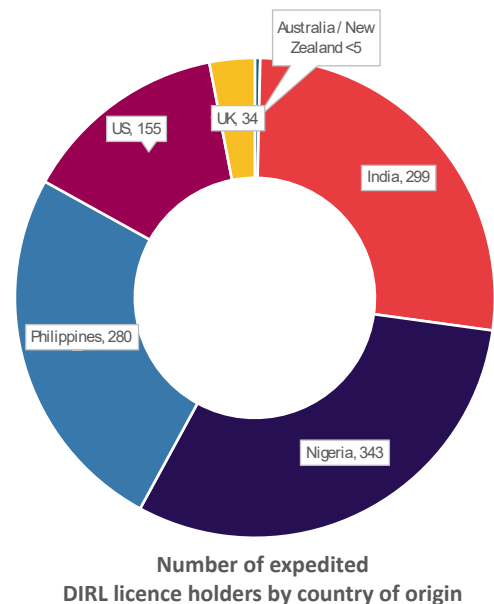
Has the expedited registration and licensure process resulted in more nurses within the NS health system?

Numbers of Nurses

During this reporting period 1,115 nurses were licensed. This represents a decrease of 26% when compared to the first six months where a total of 1,517 were licensed. Since launching the new expedited pathway, NSCN has licensed 2,632 new nurses. Our findings show that this translates to a total increase of 16% of nurses eligible to work in Nova Scotia when compared with the total number of nurses registered and licensed on April 30, 2023.

Time to Licensure¹

During this reporting period, results show that applicants were made eligible for licensure an average of 8.6 days after NSCN received a completed expedited application and the application fee. Once eligibility has been established, applicants can activate their license by paying the registration and licensure fee. On average, applicants take 10.7 days from initial notification of eligibility to activate their license.



How many nurses are eligible to move from a conditional license to a practicing license?

Prior to successfully passing the required entrance exam, nurses can work within the health system with a conditional license. Successfully passing the entrance exam makes the nurse eligible for a practicing license.

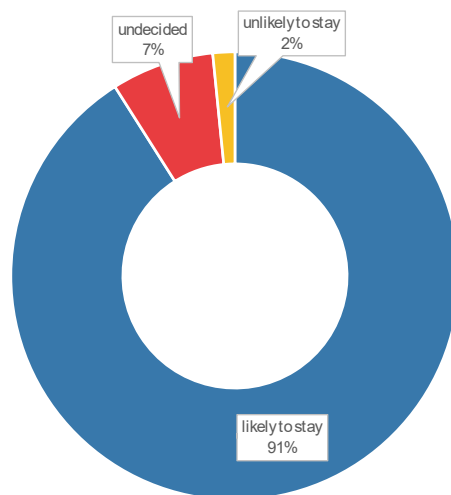
A total of 348 registrants have successfully passed the applicable licensing exam (336 passed the NCLEX and 12 passed the CPNRE) during this reporting period. A total of 450 IENs have successfully passed the applicable licensing exam since the launch of the new expedited pathway.

¹ This is the first time this data has been reported therefore there is no comparison to the first 6 months of the expedited licensing process.

How many nurses are staying in Nova Scotia?

This is being evaluated through a few measures, including registrant requests for a Verification of Registration (VOR). Requesting a VOR can be an indication that a registrant may be seeking registration and licensure in another jurisdiction because other regulatory bodies require VORs as part of their application requirements. During this reporting period, 179 requests were received. This is up from 40 requests in the first reporting period. Since first introducing the expedited registration and licensure process, 8% of IENs licensed under the process have requested VORs.

Survey participants were also asked how likely they were to stay in Nova Scotia. Results for this reporting period indicated that 91% of respondents (516 individuals) indicated they were very likely to stay in Nova Scotia, while 7% of respondents (42 individuals) reported they were undecided. 2% of respondents (9 individuals) reported they were unlikely to stay in the province. These results are in keeping with results from the first reporting period from May 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023.



Number of nurses staying in NS

Are nurses employed within the Nova Scotia health system?

Survey participants were asked if they were currently working within the Nova Scotia health system. Results for this reporting period indicated that 74 respondents reported they were working as a nurse in the system, four as an LPN and 70 as an RN. The majority have gained nursing employment within four months of being licensed (74%), while the remainder did not obtain employment until four to six months after being licensed. These results are about the same as the results from the first reporting period from May 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023.

Results indicate that the majority of these nurses are working full time (78%) with the remainder reporting they are working part-time (9%) or casual (13%). 81% of respondents reported this is their preferred employment status. This represents a decrease of 13% of respondents working full-time and an increase of 7% in those working casual from the first reporting period from May 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023. 89% of respondents indicated that this is their preferred status, which is in keeping with the first reporting period.

Survey respondents who are not employed were asked why they were not currently employed as a nurse in Nova Scotia. 58% indicated they could not find a job, 29% indicated they do not live in Canada or in NS. About the same percentage reported they could not find a job (62%) in the first reporting period. These survey responses are consistent with the themes found in the practice consultations for these nurses over the same time frame.

Has the expedited registration and licensure process resulted in any unintended regulatory impacts?

NSCN Supports

NSCN received 21 requests for practice support from registrants licensed through the expedited registration and licensure process or from managers supporting these registrants during this reporting period. This is a decrease of 40% over the last reporting period. The nature of the practice support requests focused on matters concerning employment (e.g., inability to find a job and/or requests about working as an LPN) and on questions about conditional license holder restrictions. Matters concerning public safety were not raised.

NSCN has developed a variety of resources to support these nurses, many who are new to the Nova Scotia health system. Web traffic to the NSCN website featuring these resources received 1,338 unique visits during November 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024, representing an increase of 28% over the last reporting period. A total of 2,384 unique visits were recorded from May 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024.

The Registration team reviewed and revised the registration section of the website to help inform applicants of the process to register and license in NS. There were 15,830 unique hits to these webpages during the period of November 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024, representing a 52% decrease over the last reporting period. A total of 48,868 unique visits were recorded from May 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024.

Bridging Program

The Nova Scotia Health Learning Institute for Health Care Providers ('The Learning Institute') has an established RN Bridging Program to support nurses who lack currency of practice to re-enter the profession. This 10-month program has been used in the past to support international nurses in practice. It provides a more extensive orientation, mentorship and transition to practice program than some employers are able to provide. The Learning Institute reported 27 referrals to the RN Bridging program, which represents 2% of the total number of registrants who applied through NSCN's expedited registration and licensure process during this timeframe. This represents a decrease of 42% in the number of referrals over the last reporting period. A total of 74 referrals were reported from May 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024. NSCN was notified that of the 27 referred registrants, eight were not successful in the program and have been asked to take a program interruption to attend sponsored language training as a condition of their employment. Following successful language training they will be welcomed back to the Bridging Program as part of a future cohort.

Regulatory Impact

Data to measure the regulatory impact was collected by evaluation of registrant engagement with NSCN regulatory activity. Over the first year of the new pathway to licensure, there were no reports, complaints or terminations for any of the individuals approved through NSCN's expedited registration and licensure process. This measure will continue to be monitored in subsequent interim reports.

Conclusion

This interim report highlights a summary of survey results to support the evaluation of NSCN's expedited registration and licensure process for international nurses from the Philippines, India, Nigeria, the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand. Over a three-week period, more than 600 international nurses responded to the evaluation survey demonstrating that there are more nurses licensed and registered in Nova Scotia. The data did not present evidence of unintended regulatory impacts. NSCN looks forward to ongoing evaluation at six-month intervals over the next 12 months, with a final evaluation expected in June 2025. We will continue to monitor these indicators over the next 12 months to identify and act on trends that may impact public safety.