

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

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 - October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

**NOVA SCOTIA  
COLLEGE OF  
NURSING**



## Introduction

As Nova Scotia's nursing regulator, the Nova Scotia College of Nursing's (NSCN's) 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<sup>st</sup>, 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 evaluation 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<sup>st</sup>, 2023
- c) Any potential unintended regulatory impacts

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

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

Periodic evaluations are planned at six-month intervals over the next 24 months, with a final evaluation on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 12-questions survey is used to obtain feedback from applicants who applied through NSCN's expedited registration and licensure process. The survey in this reporting period was open for two weeks and had an 84% response rate.

## Results

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

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

#### Numbers of nurses

Within the first six months of launching the new pathway, NSCN licensed 1,517 registered nurses. Our findings show that the number of international nurses eligible to work in Nova Scotia increased by 9.25%<sup>1</sup>.

#### 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 102 registrants have successfully passed the NCLEX exam in this reporting period.

#### How many nurses are staying in Nova Scotia?

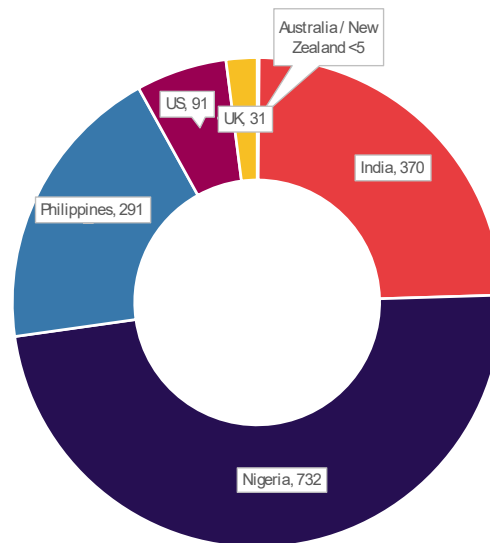
This is being evaluated through a few measures, one being registrant requests for a Verification of Registration (VOR). Requesting a VOR can be an indication that a registrant may be seeking registration and licensure in another jurisdiction because other regulatory bodies require these as part of their application requirements. From May 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023, NSCN received a total of 40 requests for VORs from international nurses licensed under the expedited process.

Survey participants were also asked how likely they were to stay in Nova Scotia. Results indicated that 94% of respondents (1,097 individuals) indicated they were very likely to stay in Nova Scotia, while 5% of respondents (56 individuals) reported they were undecided. 1% of respondents (8 individuals) reported they were unlikely to stay in the province.

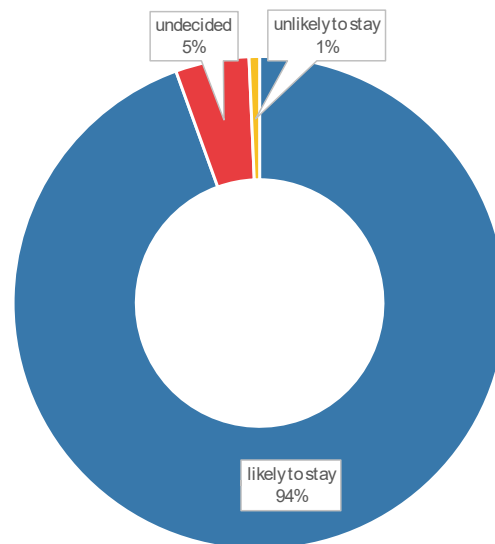
#### Are nurses employed within the Nova Scotia health system?

Survey participants were asked if they were currently working within the Nova Scotia health system. 164 respondents reported they were working as a nurse in the system. The majority have gained nursing employment within four months of being licensed (73%), while the remainder did not obtain employment until four to six months after being licensed.

<sup>1</sup> Future reports will include the time it takes to license nurses through the new pathway. This data was unavailable for the first six months of this initiative.



Number of expedited DIRL licence holders by country of origin



Number of nurses staying in NS

Results indicate that the majority of these nurses are working full time (90%) with the remainder reporting they are working part-time or casual. 89% of respondents reported this is their preferred employment status.

Survey respondents who are not employed were asked why they were not currently employed as a nurse in Nova Scotia. 62% indicated they could not find a job, 17% indicated they do not live in Canada or in NS. 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 35 requests for practice support from registrants licensed through the expedited registration and licensure process or from managers supporting these registrants. These inquiries represent 5% of the total inquiries received by NSCN during this timeframe. The themes of these requests for practice support did not include public safety concerns. The themes focused on matters concerning employment and questions about conditional license holder restrictions.

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 1,046 unique visits during May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

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 was a reported 33,038 unique hits to these webpages during May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023- October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

### 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 47 referrals to the RN Bridging program during the reporting period, which represents 3% of the total number of registrants who applied through NSCN's expedited registration and licensure process during this timeframe.

### Regulatory Impact

Data to measure the regulatory impact was collected by evaluation of registrant engagement with NSCN regulatory activity. Over the first six months 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 two-week period, more than 1500 international nurses responded to the evaluation survey. The data did not present evidence of unintended regulatory impacts. NSCN looks forward to ongoing evaluation at six-month intervals over the next 18 months, with a final evaluation expected in May 2025. We will continue to monitor these indicators over the next 18 months to identify and act on trends.