



National Nursing Assessment Service
Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Taking our nursing assessment service to a whole new level



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Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to introduce the National Nursing Assessment Service's (NNAS) Strategic Plan for 2019-2021. It marks an important new phase in the development and operation of the NNAS as we re-commit our organization to serving IENs, Regulatory Bodies, government and other stakeholders in ways that support a diverse and safe nursing workforce in Canada. Along with our newly articulated Mission and Vision, is the value we commit to provide to IENs, the Canadian public, Nursing Regulatory Bodies as well as our government stakeholders.



The Strategic Plan launches the beginning of an implementation process to achieve our strategic priorities. It is with intention that our priorities are focused in a two-year time frame. We believe, that once achieved, they will create the foundation to achieve our longer-term vision. During our planning process, the Board decided to identify our core values, the behaviours that will guide our work as we move forward, in 2019, and then they will be added to this plan.

I would like to express my appreciation to all those who whole-heartedly participated in this process and

whose insights contributed greatly to the final product. Special thanks goes to Louise Watson, project consultant. I look forward to seeing the important impact NNAS will have as we implement this plan over the next 2 years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Power." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Lynn Power,
NNAS Board Chair

Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

This is an exciting time for NNAS. As the new Executive Director, I feel fortunate to be joining NNAS as we launch our focused and forward-thinking Strategic Plan. Through the planning process, the Board identified four key priorities that provide a clear roadmap to guide our work over the next 2 years. I am looking forward to working with the Board and our stakeholders to operationalize the plan and help NNAS reach its potential.

Yours sincerely,

Gayle Waxman
Executive Director, NNAS

The back row from left to right is: Laurie Janes, Joy Peacock, Laura Panteluk, Stephen Mills, Tamara Richter, Sheila Marchant-Short, Katherine Stansfield. **The front row from left to right is:** Barbara Lowe, Lynn Power (Chair), Lynsey Nair (Vice Chair), Dawn Rix-Moore. **Not in the photo:** Jennifer Breton. (Photo taken September 2018).





Building the Plan

2018 was a year of change for NNAS and provided an excellent canvas for the Board of Directors to set a direction for the future.

We agreed it was time to build on all we had learned since inception in 2012, and to confront the operational and regulator-centric focus that had served us in the past, but may not in the future. Our planning process helped us become more focused as we asked and answered some critical questions:

What do we want to achieve, not just do?

Why do we really exist and for whom?

What value do we want to deliver to all our key stakeholders?

We believed it was time to become clear on the shifts that needed to take place and why.

Early in 2018, the Board formed the strategic planning committee and developed a planning process that would include revisiting our core purpose as well as envisioning an expanded future. This strategic direction was complimented by a set of mid-term goals that could lay a solid foundation and act as a springboard for growth and improvement.

Facilitated conversations took place during three live sessions in February, May and September, supported by additional small group work between these sessions.

In the first live session, a facilitated process collected input from all the 21 regulator members. This input formed the groundwork that was used during the two-day May retreat, as the Board began answering the tough strategic questions. In September, with four new board members, the draft plan was refined and improved. In February 2019, the Board of Directors approved the plan.

Regulator Input

To help guide us on our path to future improvement, we went to our 21 regulator members and took a close look at NNAS' strengths and weaknesses as well as our external opportunities and threats. Below is a summary of what we discovered.



Where we have strengths

- Trailblazers in regulation collaboration and national credentialing
- Proven track record in managing an innovative federally funded project
- Organizational culture grounded in continuous improvement and learning
- Financially able to support organizational growth and change

May 2018

Where we have challenges

- Focusing process improvements for the IEN
- Shared understanding of our value to partners
- Governance to support next step in innovation
- Objective performance assessment measures
- Evolving organizational structure, leadership and capabilities
- Harmonization of the first 4 steps of the assessment process

Opportunities for Growth

- Increased demand for internationally educated nurses in Canada
- Integrating credential assessment with Immigration (currently two places, two processes)
- Harmonization of nursing credentialing
- Adding Nurse Practitioners qualifications to our IEN assessment process
- Sharing what we learned with other regulators and government branches

External threats to Growth

- Potential risk from an external single vendor model
- Cyber security, data protection and fraud
- Variability of IEN supply and Canadian jurisdictional demand
- High financial cost for IEN to come Canada
- Changes in Canada's immigration policies
- Changes in regulatory requirements
- Limited "bridging" education for IENs

Our Strategic Direction

How we will use our strategic direction:

- It will act as a compass for our decision-making on what we will focus on in the future and what we will not
- It will provide the foundation for all our communications

Our guidelines for developing our strategic direction:

- Use language that is easy to understand by our customer and our partners
- Avoid language that makes it nurse or regulator centric
- It is more about the Why than the What of NNAS

Our Mission

The National Nursing Assessment Service exists to start Internationally Educated Nurses on their journey to nursing practice in Canada.

Our Long Term Vision for the Future

NNAS is recognized around the world as the gold standard for assessing nurses.

When NNAS is recognized as an international gold standard, we would observe other countries accepting IENS (that have been assessed to practice in Canada), being accepted to practice in other countries without having to go through another assessment process.

Our beginning

Nurses from all over the world come to live and work in Canada for many different reasons, and before 2012 the process was challenging for internationally educated nurses to navigate. It was also time consuming for nursing regulators in different provinces to be providing the same duplicated service. So in 2012, the nursing regulators worked with provincial and federal governments to create one process for internationally educated nursing (IENs) candidates to be assessed for Canadian nursing registration.

What we do today

Today, NNAS is a not-for-profit organization providing one standardized national process for all internationally educated nurses to submit their documents and start their assessment process for Canadian nursing registration. We currently represent Canadian nursing regulatory bodies (except Quebec and

the territories) and collaborate with them to ensure the continuation of safe nursing for the Canadian public. NNAS assesses the qualifications of IENs who want to practice in Canada, within 3 distinct nursing qualifications:

- Registered Nurses (RN),
- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), and
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPN)

We do not license nurses for practice. Licensing is the responsibility of regulators and we work in partnership with them to fulfill their mandate of keeping the public safe.

Our part in keeping the public safe is to deliver one national assessment process that is:

- Fair, meaning an IEN must be assessed against the same qualifications as a nurse educated in Canada no matter where they are located in the world

- Consistent, meaning every IEN goes through the same steps in the assessment process
- Reliable, meaning the information provided to the IEN is easy to use and is clear on the next steps including choosing the appropriate nursing pathway

Our priority focus is the assessment of qualifications and we are rigorous in our approach and follow scientific methods. In order to assess an IEN candidate's qualifications as comparable to Canadian education standards, we use close to 100 competencies to compare educational standards between Canada and the other countries. It takes time and a detailed method.

We never work alone in our assessment process. Critical roles are delivered by jurisdictional nursing regulators across Canada, the Canadian Immigration process and the Federal Government.

We value our Stakeholders and seek to deliver these results:

For the IENs who want to work as nurses in Canada, the results we seek to deliver:

- The nursing assessment process is easy to follow
- IENs know their likelihood to qualify early in the process

For the public who receive nursing care, the value we seek to deliver:

- Nursing care in Canada is safe no matter where the nurse was educated

For the Nursing regulators in Canada, the results we seek to deliver:

- The NNAS advisory report informs the next steps in the jurisdiction's licensing process and allows the regulator and the IENs to move more quickly through the nursing assessment process.

For The Federal and Provincial Governments, the results we seek to deliver:

- The NNAS assessment process introduces qualified internationally educated nurses more quickly into our health care system, complimenting our Canadian Workforce.

Our 2019-2021 Priorities

01

Improve the effectiveness of our nursing assessment process

How we want to grow:

To improve the effectiveness of the process, we will focus on the experience of our primary user, the IEN, and seek regular feedback as we apply improvements. Our first step will be to make the end-to-end process more transparent by sharing the expected timelines, and a full outline of all the steps that NNAS controls and those we don't. For the steps that NNAS works in partnership with regulators and stakeholders to improve, we will facilitate conversations that work towards more process uniformity across jurisdictions and improved usability of nursing regulator reports.

The results we want to achieve from these improvements:

- IENs find the assessment process easy to follow
- IENs know their likelihood to qualify early in the process
- IENs find the reports easy to use and make decisions from
- NNAS reports meet the needs of nursing regulators
- It takes less time to process an IEN from application to licensure (NNAS's process is quick)
- NNAS process reduces time between initial application and registration.

02

Strengthen Organizational Capacity

How we want to grow:

To ensure that our organizational capacity and capabilities support NNAS's transition and growth, we will focus on three specific areas:

- Objective assessment of our organization's performance so we can continually improve the fairness, consistency and reliability of our service to IENs.
- The structure and processes that the Board, employees and contractors use to deliver on our core work
- Board and management accountabilities and decision-making processes

The results we want to achieve from these improvements:

- Human resources meet NNAS growth needs
- NNAS delivers on core work*

**Definition: Core work represents those must-do activities that are necessary to gain strategic advantage and achieve our vision and deliver on our mission. We must resource them. If we are not doing them well, we must develop them and/or acquire the capabilities of developing them.*

Over the next two years, NNAS will focus on these priorities so we can build the solid foundation we need to strive towards our longer-term vision.

03

Transform NNAS Governance

How we want to grow:

We must radically shift our governance model to one that represents the competencies and perspectives our organization needs to achieve our Vision.

Our transformation will focus on these areas:

- Board composition and selection
- Bylaw development
- Role clarity for Board members and employees with clear accountability
- Articulated NNAS values to guide our collective behaviours
- More meaningful measures to use in assessing our organization's outcomes

The results we want to achieve from these improvements:

- Board composition matches NNAS growth
- The Board has evidence to make informed decisions

04

Strengthen Stakeholder Relationships

How we want to grow:

As we transition NNAS from a regulator-based governance structure to a competency-based one, and as we continue to improve and expand our nursing assessment process, we must also transform our relationships with our stakeholders. As our relationship with nursing regulators shifts, we will work diligently to create communication and collaboration processes that help us work together to achieve our shared goals.

To continue to deliver value to our Immigration and Government stakeholders, we will:

- Tap into their knowledge and expertise
- Ensure our communications are timely and easy to take actions from.

The results we want to achieve from these improvements:

- Stakeholders believe NNAS is delivering on its mandate
- Stakeholders have confidence in the value NNAS delivers

In Conclusion

Our strategic plan has set the direction that will inform our execution process. Execution is when we allocate our time, energy and budget to those high leverage actions, which we believe, will help us make progress on our strategic priorities.

We are committed to developing meaningful performance measures that provide us with feedback on how we are progressing on our priorities. To develop meaningful actions, we will look into our processes and unearth the root causes that may be holding performance back. The Board will hold quarterly strategy performance reviews and collaboratively make decisions to help us overcome the barriers and consider unexpected events as the future becomes the present.



Glossary

Mission

For NNAS, our Mission answers the question “Why do we exist as an organization?” or “What is the purpose of NNAS?”

Vision

For NNAS, our Vision answers the question, “Where do we want to be in future?” or in the word’s of Jim Collins “What is NNAS’s big hairy audacious goal?”

Priorities

At NNAS we define priorities like others might say goals or objectives. They are the areas where that we must focus our change efforts over the next couple years.

Core Work

At NNAS, core work represents those must-do activities that are necessary to gain strategic advantage, achieve our vision and deliver on our mission. We must resource them. If we are not doing them well, we must develop them and/or acquire the capabilities to develop them.

IEN

Internationally Educated Nurses are those individuals who have completed education to become a nurse in another country than Canada and are applying to work as a nurse within Canada.

RB

Nursing regulatory bodies assure Canadians that they are receiving safe and ethical care from competent, qualified nurses. Each provincial/territorial government is responsible for delivering its health care and regulating its health-care providers. Provinces and territories grant responsibility for nursing regulation to professional colleges and/or nursing associations. In some provinces, a single regulatory body regulates all nursing groups. In other provinces, there is a different regulatory body for each nursing group.