

2024/25 Guidelines for Participation in the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) Program

Nursing and Professional Practice Division
Ministry of Health

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Definitions

In the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) program guidelines document, these terms have the following meanings:

Above Staffing Complement/Supernumerary: Above the quantity of nursing resources required to staff a unit to full capacity. The new nurse must not be used to fill staff shortages.

Budget Request: A form issued through the NGG online portal and submitted by the employer to request funding for the NGG program.

College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO): The governing body for registered nurses (RNs), registered practical nurses (RPNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Ontario, Canada.

Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPNRE): A national examination that measures the competencies required of RPNs at the beginning of their practice. RPN applicants to the CNO must successfully complete the CPNRE to register as an RPN in Ontario.

Funding Agreement: The transfer payment agreement (TPA) between the Ministry of Health (the ministry) and a health care organization participating in the NGG program. The TPA outlines the terms and conditions of the funding and stipulates the reporting requirements.

Funding Year: The period commencing April 1, 2024, and ending March 31, 2025.

Internationally Educated Nurse (IEN): A nurse who received their basic nursing education in a country other than Canada.

Match: Process by which an employer offers an eligible new nurse a position in the NGG program, and the new nurse accepts the position on the NGG online portal.

Mentor/Mentorship: A formal supportive relationship between two or more health professionals that has the potential to result in professional growth and development for both mentors and mentees, and support learning objectives. In the NGG program, a minimum of one mentor must be available for the new nurse throughout the transition into practice period. The ministry recommends that mentors be nurses with a minimum of 3-5 years of nursing experience. All attempts should be made to ensure there is continuity in the mentor(s) provided.

National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN): A national examination that measures the competencies required of RNs at the beginning of their practice. RN applicants to the CNO must successfully complete the NCLEX-RN to register as an RN in Ontario.

New Nurse: A new nurse who is within 12 months of registering with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), and either graduated from a Canadian nursing education program or is an IEN applying to or participating in the NGG program, as per the eligibility requirements.

NGG Online Portal: The website that supports the functional requirements of the NGG program (e.g., posting of jobs, matching of nurses with employers, submission of budget requests and reporting, etc.). The portal is accessible at <https://www.nursescareerstart.health.gov.on.ca>.

Reinvestment Funds: Funding provided by the ministry to health care organizations to invest in existing frontline nurses and their professional development. Reinvestment funds may be used for mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, internships in a specialty area, and initiatives to support existing frontline IENs working within the organization.

Transition Period: One year period beginning on the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks). The employer is expected to transition the new nurse into a full-time position or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within this one-year period upon the completion of the transition into practice period (12 weeks),

Transition into Practice Leader: A designated leader within the organization who is accountable for the NGG program transition into practice period and tracks the progress with the new nurse(s) and mentor(s).

Transition into Practice Period: A 12-week period where the NGG program provides funding to the employer for the new nurse's transition into practice period. This period is a new nurse's introduction to the employing health care organization to support their transition into practice for the delivery of safe, high quality, patient centered care. The NGG program transition into practice period must be a full-time position or provide the new nurse the equivalent of full-time hours, be in a supernumerary position and build on the prior education and experience of the new nurse in the clinical setting. The last day for a new nurse to begin their transition into practice period is December 31st of the funding year.

1. Overview of The Nursing Graduate Guarantee Program

1.1 The Nursing Graduate Guarantee Program

The Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) program is funded by the Ministry of Health (the ministry) and supports new Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses who are within 12 months of registering with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) by providing them with a temporary full-time employment opportunity above employers' existing staffing complement, to improve their transition into practice, and into full-time employment.

The NGG program aims to:

- Support new nurses in Ontario as they transition into practice;
- Improve the integration of new nurses into the workforce;
- Promote the availability of full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for new nurses; and
- Promote health workforce planning at the organizational level.

1.2 How the NGG program Works

The NGG online portal is used to link new nurses to employers (<https://www.nursescareerstart.health.gov.on.ca>).

The ministry will provide a total of 20 weeks of funding to employers per new nurse participating in the NGG program:

- 12 weeks for the new nurse's transition into practice period where the new nurse is working full-time or the equivalent of full-time hours and;
- 8 weeks for the reinvestment fund to support existing frontline nurses and their professional development.

Note:

Organizations may use reinvestment funding to extend the transition period but must obtain approval from the ministry prior to doing so. The reinvestment period cannot be reduced to zero weeks as it is a mandatory component of the program and organizations must remain within the 20 weeks maximum. For example, an organization may extend the transition into practice period to 14 weeks and reduce

the reinvestment period to 6 weeks, for a total of 20 weeks. Organizations are not permitted to extend the reinvestment period beyond 8 weeks maximum.

NGG funding cannot be used to fund staff positions. The 12-week transition to practice period must be over and above the organization's existing staffing complement.

The new nurse's transition into practice period must meet the minimum requirements, set out in section 3.2.

Upon completion of the transition to practice period (12 weeks), the employer is expected to transition the new nurse into full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within one year (12 months) of the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks).

Section 3.2 lists eligible nursing re-investment options.

Please see Appendix A for resources that may be helpful to new nurses and employers participating in the NGG program.

2. Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Eligibility for New Nurses

Participation in the NGG program is open to nurses within 12 months of registering with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO).

Canadian educated nurses who:

- Graduated with a baccalaureate degree in nursing or a diploma from a practical nursing program in Canada;
- Have not been employed as a nurse in Ontario in the six months prior to participating in the NGG program;
- Match with an employer on the NGG online portal within 12 months of registering with the CNO;
- Are legally eligible to work full-time hours or the equivalent of full-time hours in Ontario and;
- Commit to accepting full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours with their NGG employer after completing the NGG program transition into practice period.

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) who:

- Completed their nursing education outside of Canada;
- Have not been employed as a nurse in Ontario in the six months prior to participating in the NGG program;
- Match with an employer on the NGG online portal within 12 months of registering with the CNO;
- Are legally eligible to work full-time hours or the equivalent of full-time hours in Ontario and;
- Commit to accepting full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours with their NGG employer after completing the NGG program transition into practice period.

A request for the NGG program eligibility extension for a new nurse who has been registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) for more than one year may be considered in the event of unforeseen circumstances and will be decided on an individual basis.

A request for an extension must be submitted to the ministry (NGGMOHLTC@ontario.ca) in writing, in advance of the nurse's eligibility expiration date. A new nurse who has not registered on the NGG online portal prior to their eligibility expiration date will not be considered for an extension.

Leaves of absence from the NGG program (e.g., health, parental, bereavement, jury duty, termination of temporary registration) are subject to applicable laws (e.g., *Employment Standards Act*), collective bargaining agreements or internal human resource policies set out by the employing organization.

The new nurse must be registered with the CNO, either in the Temporary or General Class, before beginning the NGG program transition into practice period.

Nurses are ineligible to participate in the NGG and Community Commitment Program for Nurses (CCPN) simultaneously.

2.2. Eligibility for Employers

The NGG program is open to health care employers from all sectors, including acute care, long-term care, home care, community care, mental health, public health, and primary care, provided they register on the NGG online portal.

To be eligible, an employer must:

- Be a health care organization that employs nurses and is funded by the government of Ontario for the provision of nursing services;
- Have the infrastructure to support successful implementation of the program (e.g., physical infrastructure, nursing education, or professional development and management supports); and
- Commit to transitioning new nurses into full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within one year (12 months) of the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks).

NGG program positions will not be funded in units and/or employer programs where there have been nursing reductions in that fiscal year, or anticipated nursing reductions. This includes, but is not limited to, units and/or employer programs where there is significant workforce instability.

3. Participating in the program

3.1 Process for New Nurses

To be eligible to participate in the NGG program, the new nurse must follow the process outlined below.

Step 1: Register on the NGG Online Portal

The new nurse must register on the NGG online portal, accessible at <https://www.nursescareerstart.health.gov.on.ca>, by selecting "Register Now!" under the "Nursing Users" section.

Note: Once a user account is created, changes to the email address will not be permitted. Please ensure the correct email address is used to register.

Step 2: Match with an Employer on the NGG Online Portal

The new nurse uses the NGG online portal to match with an employer by:

1. Reviewing the NGG online portal job registry regularly;
2. Applying to positions offered on the job registry by employers within their 12-month eligibility period;
3. Completing the employer's interviewing process, and
4. Accepting a position that is offered by an employer on the NGG online portal.

After accepting the job offer on the NGG online portal, the new nurse has 72 hours to cancel and decline that job offer. Once 72 hours has passed, the employer and new nurse will have agreed to the match.

Step 3: Complete the Transition into Practice Period

The new nurse must complete the transition into practice period (12 weeks) with the employer in a temporary, full-time position that is above the staffing complement. Please see section 3.2 for additional information on the minimum requirements.

The employer is expected to transition the new nurse into full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours within the organization for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within one year (12 months) of the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks).

3.2 Process for Employers

To be eligible to participate in the NGG program, the employer must follow the process outlined below.

Step 1: Register on the NGG Online Portal

The employer registers on the on NGG online portal, accessible at: <https://www.nursescareerstart.health.gov.on.ca>, by selecting "Register as Employer" under the "Health Care Organizations and Employer" section.

Note: The employer's contact information (e.g., email addresses) on the NGG online portal must always be up to date. The ministry sends important updates to employers via email.

Step 2: Match with a New Nurse on the NGG Online Portal

The employer uses the NGG online portal to match with a new nurse by:

1. Projecting the availability of full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for new nurses based on the employer's analysis of staffing and operational needs;
2. Posting positions on the NGG online portal;
3. Ensuring that a new nurse is eligible to participate in the NGG program before considering them for employment (i.e., ensuring the CNO registration number is valid, ensuring the new nurse meets the eligibility criteria of the NGG program, new nurse is

legally eligible to work full-time hours or the equivalent of full-time hours in Ontario etc.).

4. Interviewing new nurse(s) considered for an NGG program position (following the employer's regular interview process); and,
5. Using the NGG online portal to provide selected new nurse(s) with an offer of employment in the program. The offer of employment must abide by any applicable collective agreement requirements.

After accepting the job offer on the NGG online portal, the new nurse has 72 hours to cancel and decline that job offer. Employers should not assume that acceptance of the position is final until 72 hours have passed.

The ministry requires that employers consult the union (if applicable) to ensure employment requirements are met, prior to posting positions for the NGG program, submitting budget requests, and utilizing the reinvestment funds.

Step 3: Request NGG Program Funding from the Ministry

The employer must request funding for the NGG program by submitting a budget request to the ministry through the NGG online portal **on or before November 15, 2024**, confirming:

1. The details of the offer;
2. That the union has been consulted (if applicable);
3. The organizations plan on how the reinvested funds will be utilized.
4. The organizations capacity and plan to transition the new nurse into full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within one year (12 months) of the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks) and;
5. Agreement to enter into a funding agreement with the ministry.

Step 4: Provide the Transition into Practice Period

The employer must provide the new nurse with a transition into practice period in a clinical setting (12 weeks). The NGG program transition into practice period must be in a supernumerary position (above staffing complement) and build on the prior education and experience of the new nurse in the clinical setting.

The employer must adhere to the following minimum transition into practice period requirements:

1. Provide the new nurse with a minimum of 3 to 6 days of general orientation to the organization, allowing the new nurse to gain

- consistent knowledge on organizational practices, policies and standards;
2. Ensure the new nurse is provided full-time or the equivalent of full-time hours during the transition into practice period (12 weeks);
 3. Ensure the new nurse starts the transition into practice period (12 weeks) on or before December 31st of the funding year;
 4. Ensure that a mentor(s) is available to work with the new nurse and that there is a designated transition into practice leader who is accountable for implementing the NGG program and tracking the progress with the new nurse and mentor(s);
 5. Define the roles of the new nurse, mentor(s) and designated transition into practice leader;
 6. Ensure that a learning plan is developed by the new nurse and mentor, with input from the designated transition into practice leader. The learning plan should be used to monitor the new nurse's progress; and
 7. Meet the goals of the learning plan by including a variety of teaching strategies and delivery methods to educate on competencies, as it relates to the area/unit of employment of the new nurse.

The new nurse must have access to a mentor at all times and the employer should make all attempts to ensure there is continuity in the mentor(s) provided. The ministry recommends that mentors be nurses with a minimum of 3-5 years of nursing experience. The level of independence for a new nurse with patients at the point of care must be agreed upon by the nurse, mentor, and designated transition into practice leader.

The new nurse must be above employers' existing staffing complement in all circumstances for the duration of the transition into practice period.

The new nurse must retain their regular, above staffing complement duties, even if the unit is functioning below staffing complement (e.g., the new nurse must not replace an existing frontline nurse if they call in sick).

Step 5: Transition the New Nurse into a Full-Time Position

Upon the completion of the transition into practice period (12 weeks), the employer is expected to transition the new nurse into a full-time position or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within the one-year period which begins on the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks).

This requirement may be waived if the employer determines that the new nurse does not have the required competencies for safe, quality care in the specific

practice setting, taking into consideration any applicable collective agreement requirements.

Funding will be recovered from the organization should the new nurse not transition into full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within the one-year period which begins on the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks) unless there were extenuating circumstances where this was not possible. Before any funds are recovered, the ministry will engage in discussions with those organizations that have not transitioned new nurses into a full-time position or the equivalent of full-time hours at the end of 12 months to determine if a longer period of time is warranted.

Step 6: Spend the Reinvestment Funds

The employer must spend the reinvestment funds provided by the ministry to support existing frontline nurses and their professional development by March 31st of the funding year. Section 4.2 lists eligible nursing re-investment options.

4. Use of Funds and Reporting Requirements

4.1 Funding Process

The NGG program funding process is as follows:

1. Employers request funding by submitting a budget request to the ministry for each new nurse through the NGG online portal. Budgets can be submitted until November 15, 2024, to cover the period commencing April 1, 2024, and ending March 31, 2025. All budget requests must be reviewed by the union representative (if applicable) and a senior nursing leader;
2. The ministry reviews all budget requests and approves/denies the budget requests in accordance with the eligibility requirements (each budget request is subject to final approval from the Minister of Health or delegate);
3. Employers enter into a funding agreement with the ministry; and,
4. The ministry issues 100% of the applicable funds once the budget request has been approved by the Minister of Health.

Subject to the Minister of Health's approval, the ministry will provide 20 weeks of funding to organizations for new nurses participating in the program:

- 12 weeks for the new nurse's transition into practice period where the new nurse is working full-time or the equivalent of full-time hours; and;
- 8 weeks for the reinvestment fund to support existing frontline nurses and their professional development.

The funding amount will be calculated based on the new nurse's salary and benefits for up to 40 hours a week (depending on the employer's full-time hours e.g., 37.5 hours), as indicated in the budget request submitted to the ministry.

New nurses will be paid sector-appropriate wages based on the rates negotiated between the employer and the bargaining unit (if applicable). Wages for new graduate nurses must be based on the starting salary at the employer's organization, whereas IENs can be paid according to their experience level, as applicable. Funding requests will include benefits (up to 24%).

4.2 Use of Funds

Employers must use the funds provided under the NGG program as follows:

- **Funds for the New Nurse's Transition into Practice Period** – The funds applicable to the 12 weeks transition into practice period must be used for the new nurse's salary and benefits. These funds may not be used for salary or incentives for nurse educators, coordinators, mentors, or for similar purposes.
- **Reinvestment Fund** – The funds applicable for the reinvestment fund must be used to support existing frontline nurses and their professional development in one of the following eligible categories:
 - **Mentorship Programs:** Funding may be used for nurse-to-nurse mentorship education programs. Funding may also be used to build/strengthen the mentorship capacity of organizations through the training of mid-career nurses to become effective mentors to new graduates.
 - **80/20 For Staff Nurses:** Funding may be used to back-fill staff nurses, allowing them to spend 20% of their time on professional development opportunities (e.g., nursing councils, patient teaching, research, education). The remaining 80% of their time would be spent in clinical practice.
 - **Internships for Experienced Nurses in Specialty Areas:** Funding may be used to allow more experienced nurses to spend time in an internship in a specialty area, above staffing complement, to assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills required to fill existing and potential vacancies.

- **Initiatives to Support IENs:** Funding may be used to help existing frontline IENs working within the organization.
- **Innovative Solutions:** Funding may be used to support the creation and implementation of innovative solutions, including technology-based solutions, to improve care delivery to support improved patient experience, transition, and care outcomes.

NGG program funding may not be used for the additional premiums paid to mentors, capital investments, or similar expenses.

The ministry requires that employers consult their union (if applicable) prior to utilizing the reinvestment funds.

All NGG funds must be spent by March 31st of the funding year for which the funds are allocated, or these funds will be subject to recovery by the Ministry.

4.3 Provision of Funds

The ministry will provide the applicable funds as follows:

- For all approved budget requests, 100% of the applicable funds will be provided to the eligible employer following ministry receipt of the executed funding agreement.

4.4 Reporting Requirements

Employers who receive NGG program funding will be required to demonstrate accountability for use of the funds within one year from the new nurse's start date.

The funding agreement will outline the terms and conditions for use of the approved funds and will stipulate the reporting requirements of the employer, including completion of a financial, program and reinvestment report and Annual Reconciliation Report Certificate (AARC). The ARRC is a document signed by the financial authorities of a health care organization (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer) to attest that the NGG program final financial reports reflect the audited financial statements of the organization.

Reports will require the verification of the Chief Executive Officer (OE Signatory), senior nursing leader (SNL), and the union representative (if applicable).

The ministry requires that employers maintain ongoing dialogue with the union representative (if applicable) to ensure they sign reports. If the union

representative does not verify and sign the final reporting, they will be required to provide a rationale to the ministry.

Note: For audit purposes, employers are required to create and maintain employment records for each eligible NGG participant hired. Employers need to maintain record with respect to ensuring that the participant is a new graduate nurse without prior employment experience, six months prior to participating in the NGG program. At the request of the ministry, employers are expected to provide employment records including the following details for each eligible NGG participant:

- CNO registration number
- NGG start and end date
- Previous employment history
- Gross amount paid (salary and benefits)

The ministry will recover funds under the following circumstances:

- Failure to obtain support from union representatives (if applicable) before participating in the NGG (recovery of 100% of funds);
- Failure to comply with the minimum transition into practice period requirements or to transition the new nurse into full-time employment or the equivalent of full-time hours for a minimum of 6 months (26 weeks) within one year (12 months) of the new nurse's start date of the transition into practice period (12 weeks). (Recovery of 100% of the funds);
- Failure to complete and submit all fully signed reports by the ministry established deadline (recovery of 100% of the funds); and
- Failure to obtain verification from union representatives on final reporting (if applicable) (recovery of 20% of funds).

Exceptions may be permitted in the event of unforeseen circumstances and will be decided on an individual basis.

5. Important Dates

Key dates to abide by when implementing the NGG program are:

Key Date	Activity
April 29, 2024	NGG online portal open for matching and budget request submissions (for the 2024/25 Fiscal year - April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025)
November 15, 2024	Last day to submit budget requests for the funding year.
November 16, 2024	NGG online portal is closed for matching and budget request submissions.
December 31, 2024	Last day for new nurses to start their transition into practice period (12 weeks).
March 31, 2025	Last day for new nurses to complete their transition into practice period and for organizations to spend the reinvestment fund.

Need Help?

For NGG program inquiries, please visit:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/hhrsd/nursing/early_career.aspx or contact the ministry at nggmohltc@ontario.ca.

Appendix A - Resources

The following resources can be used to support employers and new nurses in participating in the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG):

1. Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) – RNAO is the professional association representing registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students in Ontario. Their mission is to foster knowledge-based nursing practice, promote quality work environments, deliver excellence in professional development, and advance healthy public policy to improve health. <http://rnao.ca/>

The RNAO has two career websites that support employment searching and provide career services. These websites are available at:

- <http://www.rncareers.ca>
- <http://careersinnursing.ca/>

2. Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) – ONA is the trade union that represents registered nurses and allied health professionals working throughout Ontario. ONA's Letter of Understanding regarding 'supernumerary positions', available online in the Central Agreement, may serve as a reference for implementing the transition into practice period through the NGG. The ONA website is accessible at <http://www.ona.org>