

# Guidelines for Participation in the Nursing Graduate Guarantee

Nursing Policy and Innovation Branch

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Copies of this document can be obtained from

INFOline: 1-866-532-3161

TTY 1-800-387-5559

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## Nursing Graduate Guarantee Guidelines

# Definitions

In the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) guidelines document, the following 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.

**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 in order to register as a RPN in Ontario.

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

**Funding Year:** The period commencing April 1<sup>st</sup> and ending the following March 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Internationally Educated Nurse (IEN):** A nurse who received her/his 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, 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, a minimum of one mentor must be available for the new nurse throughout the transition into practice period. 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 in order to register as a RN in Ontario.

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**New Nurse:** A new graduate nurse from a Canadian nursing education program or an IEN applying to or participating in the NGG, as per the eligibility requirements.

**NGG Online Portal:** The website that supports the functional requirements of the NGG (e.g., posting of jobs, matching of nurses with employers, submission of budget requests and reporting, etc.). The portal is also known as the *Nurses' Career Start Gateway* and 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 into Permanent, Full-Time Employment Period:** The time from the new nurse's completion of the 12 week transition into practice period until she/he is hired into the organization in a permanent, full-time position. This period expires one year from the new nurse's start date.

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

**Transition into Practice Period:** A new nurse's introduction to the employing health care organization to support her/his transition into practice for the delivery of safe, high quality, patient centered care. The NGG provides 12 weeks of funding for the new nurse's transition into practice period. The NGG transition into practice period must be in a supernumerary position and build on the prior education and experience of the new nurse in the clinical setting.

# 1 Overview

## 1.1 The Nursing Graduate Guarantee

The Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) is a program funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (the ministry) that supports new nurses by providing them with a full-time employment opportunity, above staffing complement. This improves their transition into practice, and into permanent, full-time employment.

The NGG 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 permanent, full-time employment for new nurses; and
- Promote health workforce planning at the organizational level.

## 1.2 How the NGG Works

The NGG online portal, *Nurses' Career Start Gateway*, is used to link new nurses to employers (<https://www.nursescareerstart.health.gov.on.ca>).

Effective April 1, 2017, the ministry will provide a total of 20 weeks of funding per new nurse participating in the NGG:

- 12 weeks for the new nurse's transition into practice period; and
- 8 weeks for the reinvestment fund to support existing frontline nurses and their professional development.

The new nurse's transition into practice period must meet the minimum requirements, set out on page 8.

The employer is expected to offer the new nurse permanent, full-time employment within one year of the new nurse's start date.

Where the new nurse is hired into permanent, full-time employment, the employer can use the 8 week reinvestment fund for other nursing initiatives. Page 10 lists eligible nursing re-investment options.

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

# 2 Eligibility Requirements

## 2.1 Eligibility for New Nurses

Participation in the NGG is open to:

Canadian educated nurses who:

- Graduated with a baccalaureate degree in nursing or a diploma from a practical nursing program in Canada;
- Match with an employer on the NGG online portal **within 12 months of course completion** (date after final grades have been received); and
- Commit to accepting permanent, full-time employment with their NGG employer after completing the NGG transition into practice period.

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) who:

- Completed their nursing education outside of Canada;
- Match with an employer on the NGG online portal **within 12 months of registering with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)**; and
- Commit to accepting permanent, full-time employment with their NGG employer after completing the NGG transition into practice period.

A request for an extension beyond 12 months may be considered in the event of unforeseen circumstances, and will be decided on an individual basis. Additionally, a new nurse whose eligibility has expired, and who has not been successful in obtaining paid nursing employment during the 12 months may be eligible for an extension, provided she/he has passed the NCLEX-RN or CPNRE.

A request for an extension must be submitted to the ministry ([nursing@ontario.ca](mailto:nursing@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 her/his eligibility expiration date will not be considered for an extension.

Leaves of absence from the NGG (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 transition into practice period.

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### 2.2 Eligibility for Employers

The NGG 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 permanent, full-time employment within one year of the new nurses' start dates.

In the acute care sector, or where applicable, NGG positions should be created first on medical and surgical units. Positions may be created in other units (e.g., specialty units) if all parties otherwise agree (this must be supported by the union representative, if applicable).

NGG 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 due to the dilution of skill mix.

## 3 Participating in the Program

### 3.1 Process for New Nurses

To be eligible to participate in the NGG, 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!" in the "Nursing Users" section.

**Note:** *The new nurse must update her/his contact information if it changes.*

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

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

1. Consulting the NGG online portal job registry regularly;
2. Applying to positions offered on the job registry by employers within her/his 12 month eligibility period;
3. Completing the employer's interviewing process, if invited; 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: Obtain Temporary Registration with the CNO**

(Required for Canadian Educated New Graduate Nurses Only)

Canadian educated new graduate nurses who have not attempted the NCLEX-RN exam must obtain Temporary Class registration with the CNO before commencing employment through the NGG.

For more information on the requirements for temporary registration, visit the CNO website at <http://www.cno.org>.

### **Step 4: Complete the Transition into Practice Period**

The new nurse must complete the transition practice period (12 weeks) with the employer in a temporary, full-time position that is above the staffing complement. Please see page 8 for additional information on the minimum requirements.

The employer is expected to transition the new nurse into permanent, full-time employment within the organization upon completing the NGG, within one year of the new nurse's start date.

## **3.2 Process for Employers**

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

### **Step 1: Register on the NGG Online Portal**

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

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**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 must use the NGG online portal to match with a new nurse by:

1. Projecting the availability of permanent, full-time employment 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 before considering her/him for employment;
4. Interviewing new nurse(s) considered for a NGG 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 has passed.

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

Consultations should include discussions about NGG implementation with a focus on safe patient care, access to appropriate mentorship and support, and other staffing considerations (e.g., nursing reductions, healthy work environment, succession planning).

A request for funding will not be accepted if the employer does not match with the new nurse on the NGG online portal prior to the new nurse starting in the program.

### **Step 3: Request NGG Funding from the Ministry**

The employer must request funding for the NGG by:

1. Submitting a budget request to the ministry, prior to the NGG start date, confirming:
  - a. The details of the offer;
  - b. That the union has been consulted (if applicable); and

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- c. Its capacity and plan to transition the new nurse into permanent, full-time employment.

2. Entering 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 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 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 and tracking the progress with the new nurse and mentor(s);
3. Define the roles of the new nurse, mentor(s) and designated transition into practice leader;
4. 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
5. 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 be above 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 she/he calls in sick).**

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 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.

### **Step 5: Transition the New Nurse into a Permanent, Full-Time Position**

The employer is expected to offer the new nurse permanent, full-time employment within one year of the new nurse's start date. This requirement may be waived if the employer determines that the new nurse does not have the required competencies for

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safe quality care in the specific practice setting, taking into consideration any applicable collective agreement requirements.

Funding will be recovered should the new nurse not transition into permanent, full-time employment at the end of the 12 month period, 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 permanent, full-time position 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 31<sup>st</sup> of the funding year. Page 10 lists eligible nursing re-investment options.

## 4 Use of Funds and Reporting Requirements

### 4.1 Funding Process

The NGG funding process is as follows:

1. Employers request funding by submitting a budget request to the ministry for each new nurse before the new nurse's start date (budgets can be submitted from April 1<sup>st</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup> of the funding year). All budget requests must be reviewed by the union representative (if applicable) and 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 and Long-Term Care);
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 and Long-Term Care.

Subject to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's approval, the ministry will provide 20 weeks of funding for new nurses participating in the program:

- 12 weeks for the new nurse's transition into practice period; 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.

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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 as follows:

- **Funds for the New Nurse's Transition into Practice Period** – The funds applicable to the 12 week 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.
  - **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.

NGG 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 31<sup>st</sup> of the funding year for which the funds are allocated or these funds will be subject to recovery by the ministry.**

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### 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 by direct deposit following ministry receipt of the executed funding agreement.
- The eligible employer will receive one amount, for each approved new nurse, within the funding year to account for the transition into practice period and reinvestment fund.

### 4.4 Reporting Requirements

Employers who receive NGG 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 and Chief Financial Officer) to attest that all the reported numbers on NGG final financial reports agree with the audited financial statements of the organization.

Reports will require the verification of the employer head, senior nursing leader, and the union representative (if applicable).

The ministry requires that employers maintain ongoing dialogue with the union representative (if applicable) to ensure her/his support to comply with the requirements. If the union representative does not verify the final reporting, she/he will be required to provide a rationale to the ministry.

#### **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 permanent, full-time employment (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 are:

| Key Date                                      | Activity  |
|---|---|
| April 1 <sup>st</sup> of the funding year     | NGG online portal is open for matching and budget requests  |
| December 15 <sup>th</sup> of the funding year | Last day to submit budget requests for the funding year   |
| December 16 <sup>th</sup> of the funding year | NGG online portal is closed for matching and budget requests  |
| December 31 <sup>st</sup> of the funding year | Last day for new nurses to start their transition into practice period                                    |
| March 31 <sup>st</sup> of the funding year    | Last day for new nurses to complete their transition into practice period and spend the reinvestment fund |

### Need Help?

For questions related to the NGG, please visit:  
[www.healthforceontario.ca](http://www.healthforceontario.ca) or contact the HealthForceOntario Info Line at  
1-800-463-1270 (ext. 6) (TTY 1-800-387-5559)

# Appendix A – Resources

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

- 1) **HealthForceOntario (HFO)** – HFO staff support implementation of the NGG for both employers and new nurses. Visit the HFO website for information on the program, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and more. The HFO website is accessible at <http://www.healthforceontario.ca/>
- 2) **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. The RNAO website is accessible at <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.net/rncareers/index.htm>
- <http://careersinnursing.ca/>

- 3) **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/index.html>
- 4) **The Nursing Health Services Research Unit (NHSRU)** – NHSRU uses the most up-to-date research evidence to guide health care policy and improve patient care in Ontario. In 2010, NHSRU collaborated with four Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to author a toolkit designed for nurse employers across the province to use as resource in working towards permanent, full-time employment for nurses.

The toolkit is accessible at [http://www.nhsru.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Series-18-Toolkit\\_FINAL\\_Jan\\_28\\_10\\_CLEAN-31.pdf](http://www.nhsru.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Series-18-Toolkit_FINAL_Jan_28_10_CLEAN-31.pdf)

For access to NHSRU's other resources and publications on permanent, full-time employment and the NGG, please visit <http://nhsru.com>

