

Integrating Internationally Educated Nurses

Addressing Canada's Critical Nursing Shortage

Evaluating and enhancing Ontario and Canada's policies to integrate IENs into the healthcare workforce





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The Nursing Shortage Crisis

Canada faces a critical nursing shortage that threatens healthcare delivery nationwide. Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) represent a vital solution to this workforce gap.

Ontario and Canada must evaluate and enhance integration policies to effectively leverage this skilled talent pool and ensure sustainable healthcare staffing.

20+

Years Experience

Clinical practice and academic development

The Crisis in Numbers

117K

Projected Shortage

Nurses needed by 2031
according to CIHI projections

10 - 14

Months to Assess

Average IEN credential
assessment timeline in
Ontario

25 - 30 %

Capacity Gap

Bridging programs meet only
a fraction of applicant demand

\$ 8 - 12K

Financial Barrier

Total cost per IEN for
assessment, testing, and
licensing

Ontario faces disproportionate impact due to rapid population growth, increasing care complexity, and workforce burnout.

Current Policy Landscape

What's Working

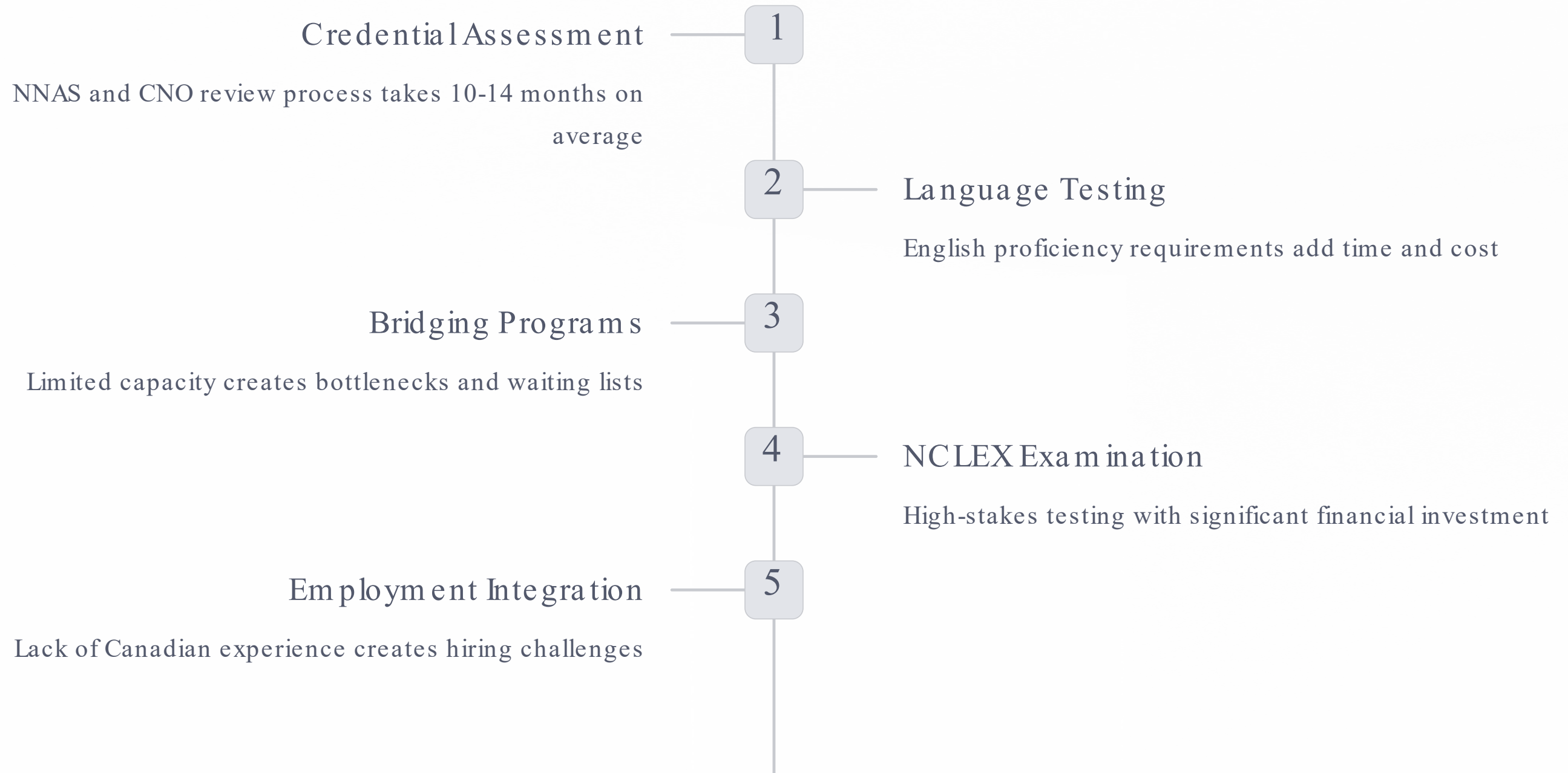
- Dedicated immigration pathways for healthcare workers
- Expedited credential assessment processes
- Bridging programs for skills integration
- Federal and provincial coordination efforts

Critical Gaps

- Assessment timelines still exceed 10 months
- Bridging capacity meets only 25-30% of demand
- Financial barriers remain prohibitive
- Limited mentorship and onboarding support



The IEN Journey: Barriers at Every Step





Reform #1: Fast-Track Assessment Model



90-Day Maximum

Reduce assessment timeline from 10-14 months to 90 days maximum



AI-Enabled Review

Implement AI-driven credential comparison for faster processing



Risk-Based Categories

Establish country-of-training categories for streamlined evaluation

Accelerated licensing would enable faster workforce deployment while maintaining quality standards.



Reform #2: Expand Bridging Capacity



Hybrid Programs

Expand online and hybrid bridging options to increase accessibility



Hospital Partnerships

Mandate hospitals to support clinical placements for IENs



Scale Capacity

Increase bridging program capacity to meet 100% of demand

Reform #3: Clinical Fellowship Program

Paid 3-6 Month Fellowship

Modeled after UK NHS and Australian frameworks, providing:

- Supervised Canadian clinical experience
- Immediate contribution to staffing needs
- Structured competency development
- Mentorship and professional integration

Impact: Addresses both workforce gaps and experience requirements simultaneously

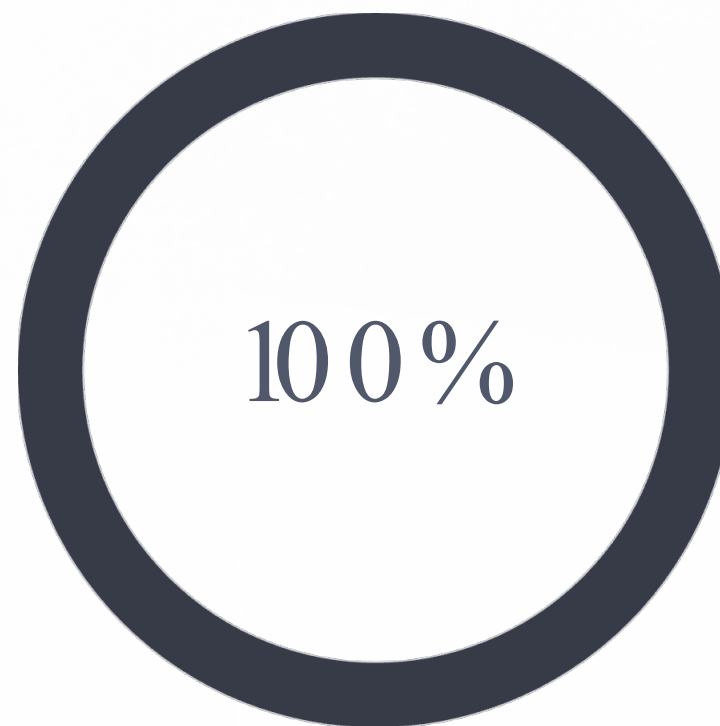


Reform #4: Financial Support Framework



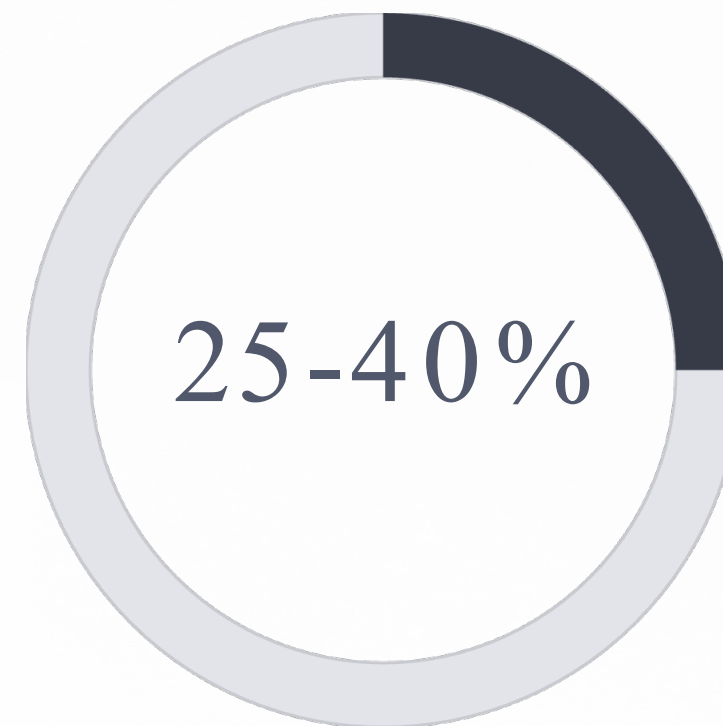
Integration Grant

Nursing Integration Grant to offset assessment and licensing costs



Exam Fee Waiver

First-attempt NCLEX fee waiver for all eligible IENs



Retention Boost

Improved retention through structured mentorship programs

Reducing financial inequities removes critical barriers to integration and improves long-term workforce retention.

Reform #5: National Tracking System

Coordinated Planning

Enable interprovincial workforce coordination and strategic deployment

Policy Evaluation

Track effectiveness of integration initiatives across jurisdictions

Data-Driven Decisions

Support evidence-based policy development and resource allocation



A Path Forward

Canada's current policy landscape for integrating IENs is moderately effective, but insufficient to resolve the magnitude of the nursing shortage.

01

Accelerate Licensing

90-day fast-track assessment with AI support

02

Expand Capacity

Scale bridging programs to meet full demand

03

Provide Support

Financial grants and clinical fellowships

04

Strengthen Systems

Mentorship programs and national tracking

Implementing these targeted reforms would significantly enhance IEN integration and bolster the sustainability of Canada's healthcare workforce.