



## Supporting Global Talent and Strengthening Local Workforces in Wisconsin

**A Practitioner's Guide for Supporting Career Navigation for Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) in Wisconsin**

**Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) are individuals who trained and worked as nurses in a country outside the U.S.**



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(WTCS) is Wisconsin's largest higher education system, providing comprehensive education opportunities that position students and employers to thrive in the face of rapid changes in the workplace, creating economic vitality for individuals, employers and communities throughout the state.



### **Acknowledgements**

This guide was created with the support of World Education Services (WES).

WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places.

This guide was also made possible through the generous financial support of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, as well as the valuable feedback and contributions from subject matter experts, practitioners, educators and workforce leaders. Special thanks to the member organizations of the CARE (Coordinate All Resources Effectively) network, comprising Wisconsin Technical College System, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Bureau of Refugee Programs, Wisconsin Literacy Inc. and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

### **Who should use this guide?**

This guide is designed for those who directly work with immigrants and refugees - in particular, internationally educated nurses (IENs) - in the state of Wisconsin.

**Primary Audience:** Career Navigators, case managers, or workforce professionals who advise immigrants and refugees on career pathways in health care.

**Secondary Audience:** Adult Education, program coordinator, employment specialists, licensing support staff, technical college staff, and other partners involved in supporting internationally educated health care professionals.

For clarity and consistency, we will refer to all the above roles collectively as practitioners throughout this guide.

**How to use this guide:**

This guide is a compact resource for practitioners in Wisconsin working with internationally educated nurses (IENs) looking to explore their career options and pathways in the state.

Use this guide to:

- Find relevant information to guide the career pathways of IEN's
- Access comprehensive resources
- Personalize career tools
- Locate partners and model programs



**Why This Matters: Advancing Inclusive Career Pathways for Nurses in the State**

Advancing inclusive career pathways for internationally Educated nurses (IENs) in Wisconsin is essential to tackling the state’s growing nurse shortage and improving care access. Communities across the U.S.—including in Wisconsin—are feeling the strain of shifting demographics, rapid technological change and economic uncertainty. As baby boomers retire, birthrates decline, and fewer young workers enter the labor force, sectors like healthcare face mounting pressure.

These workforce gaps have tangible consequences: longer wait times for care, higher costs and limited services in both rural and urban areas. Immigrants already play essential roles in healthcare, filling positions as nurses, caregivers and medical professionals—but many internationally trained professionals remain sidelined due to credentialing and licensing barriers.

The [nursing workforce shortage](#) in Wisconsin is expected to reach nearly 19,000 RNs by 2040. Nationwide, [immigrant nurses](#) already make up 16% of the RN workforce, and there are more than [263,000 immigrants and refugees](#) with health-related degrees in the U.S. By investing in inclusive pathways such as credential evaluation support, targeted bridge programs and equitable licensure reform, Wisconsin can better meet its healthcare demands, lower costs and build a more resilient workforce for the future.



## Chapter 1: The Nursing Profession in the U.S.

[Nursing is the largest health care profession in the United States](#). It is also a profession that faces significant workforce shortages affecting communities through decreased access and quality of care. To address these shortages several states currently propose legislation to improve licensing or re-licensing processes for internationally educated nurses. Read more in the World Education Services national e-guide for Internationally Educated Nurses [here](#). To learn more about proposed legislation and to monitor state and federal policies that create pathways to employment and educational opportunity for immigrants and refugees, including internationally educated nurses, see the World Education Services Policy Tracker [here](#).

Nursing is a licensed and highly regulated profession in the United States, with certification and licensure requirements designed to protect public health and safety. These requirements apply to all nurses regardless of where they received their education.

As outlined in the [World Education Services \(WES\) Guide for Internationally Educated Nurses](#), working as a nurse in the U.S. means securing the appropriate license or certification based on the nursing role and the state they want to work in:

- Registered Nurses (RNs) must generally pass the NCLEX-RN and obtain a state-issued license. Generally, RNs must complete an ADN or BSN (or international equivalent). They must also meet continuing education requirements which vary per state to ensure renewal of their license.
- Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) must be licensed as RNs then earn additional advanced certifications. They must complete a graduate level program in a specific APRN role and pass the certification exam, then obtain a state level license.
- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) must complete a state approved practical nursing program, pass the NCLEX-PN and obtain a state-issued license.
- Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) must complete a training program and pass a state-approved certification exam.

Importantly, a nursing license from another country is not valid in the U.S. Internationally educated nurses (IEN) must meet the same licensing standards as U.S.-educated nurses but the process often includes additional steps such as [English proficiency exams](#) and credential evaluation.

Because the U.S. licensure process can be lengthy, costly and complex, many internationally trained nurses explore related or alternative career options while navigating the system—or in some cases, instead of returning to licensed practice.

Practitioners play a key role by helping individuals understand the licensing process and apply their transferable skills, ensuring they find meaningful and suitable career pathways within or adjacent to the healthcare field (see Chapter 4 for more guidance).

For more detailed national guidance, visit the [WES Career Pathways page](#) and review the full [E- Guide](#).



## Chapter 2: Pathways in Nursing in Wisconsin

For internationally educated nurses (IEN) seeking to practice in Wisconsin understanding the available licensure pathways is key. At the time of publication of this e-guide, Wisconsin offers three main routes to help individuals reenter or enter the profession,

recognizing the varied needs of new graduates, nurses with gaps in practice, and internationally educated professionals. See [full guidance](#).



**Always consult the state licensing board website for the most recent and accurate information and guidance.**

## Quick Guide

Path	Ideal For	Requirements
Temporary Permit	Individuals with nursing credentials from another country, awaiting NCLEX results	Form 2434 + \$10 - practice under supervision of an RN for up to six months
Limited (Refresher) License	Inactive nurses (5+ years) or re-entry candidates	<a href="#">Apply</a> + approved refresher course- petition for full license
Alternative Education Path	Individuals with non-standard credentials	Submit tailored pathway for board approval under Admin code N 2.40

### Temporary Permit

This permit allows individuals to begin supervised practice while awaiting NCLEX results.

#### Who is it for?

- ✓ Graduates of U.S. or internationally accredited nursing programs who have applied for full licensure and pending NCLEX testing.
- ✓ Internationally trained nurses who have submitted required credential evaluations and registered for the NCLEX.

#### Key Features

- Valid for 90 days, with one 90-day renewal permitted (maximum six months total).
- Supervised RN practice is required until full licensure is issued (note: it is the responsibility of the employer to assign a supervising preceptor)
- Available for both RN and LPN applicants.

#### Requirements

- Complete the [DSPS LicenseE application](#).
- Submit Form 2434, [verification of education](#), and pay the \$10 permit fee.

- Register for the NCLEX through Pearson VUE.

### Helpful Links

- [Temporary Permit Instructions \(Form 2434\)](#)
- [TruMerit](#) (formerly known as CGFNS)
- [Wisconsin RN Licensing Info](#)
- [Wisconsin Credentialing Information for registered nurse/Licensed practical nurse applicants](#)

### Limited License for Refresher Education

This path supports nurses who have not practiced for a significant period (typically five+ years) and require a refresher course to return to active licensure.

#### Who is it for?

- ✓ U.S.- or internationally educated nurses who have not practiced recently.
- ✓ Individuals with a previous Wisconsin license that has lapsed or been inactive.

#### Key Features

- Issued for the duration of a Board-approved refresher program.
- Provides limited, supervised practice during the course (note: ensure students are aware of the importance of progressing in the course to avoid timing out of the limited licensure).
- Leads to full RN or LPN licensure upon successful course completion and Board approval.

#### Requirements

- Submit an application for a limited license through the [DSPS LicensE portal](#).
- Enroll in a Board-approved refresher course (includes lab and clinical hours). Read more in the Wisconsin Administration code (section N1) [here](#) .
- Background check and proof of former licensure may be required.

### Helpful Links

- [WI Administrative Code N 2.35 – Refresher Program License](#)
- [List of Board-Approved Refresher Courses](#)

### **Alternative Education Path (Wis. Admin. Code N 2.10(2m))**

This option enables internationally educated nurses to obtain full licensure without needing a U.S. refresher course if their prior education and qualifications meet Wisconsin's standards.

#### **Who is it for?**

- ✓ Nurses educated and licensed outside the U.S.
- ✓ Nurses who have passed the NCLEX or its predecessor.
- ✓ Individuals not currently enrolled in other remedial/alternative education programs.

#### **Key Features**

- Bypasses traditional refresher courses.
- Leads directly to full licensure upon Board review.
- Requires verification of equivalency and English language proficiency (if applicable).

#### **Requirements**

- Credential evaluation. (See guidance [here](#))
- Proof of English proficiency (e.g., TOEFL/IELTS) if education was not in English.
- Apply through the [DSPS LicensE portal](#).
- Pass the NCLEX-RN.
- Submit supporting documentation outlined in [Wis. Admin. Code N 2.10\(2m\)](#).

#### **Credential Evaluation: What you need to know**

A credential evaluation provides recognition for an individual's education, training or credentials from another country. See [World Education Services video library](#) for more information on credential evaluations. An evaluation is NOT the same as credential translation or recognition. Translating a credential involves the professional conversion from another language into English to be used in the credential evaluation process.

Credential recognition happens when decision makers (such as employers, higher education institutions or licensing bodies) accept the credential evaluation report.

Direct individuals to the free [WES equivalency tool](#) for an estimate of how their highest degree translates into the U.S equivalent but note this does not replace a formal evaluation. The credential evaluation authority for nurses is TruMerit (formerly CGFNS). Because the credential evaluation and licensure processes can be time consuming and costly, always refer individuals to the relevant decision-making body (for example licensing board) for the most accurate and updated information on the process and which evaluation provider to use if needed.

### Helpful Resources

- [TruMerit \(formerly\)CGFNS Credential Evaluation Services](#)
- [WES Nursing Career Pathways Guide](#)

Licensing Body Contact – [Wisconsin DSPS Board of Nursing](#)

**Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS)**

**Website:** [dsps.wi.gov](https://dsps.wi.gov)

**Phone:** (608) 266-2112

**Toll-free:** 1 (877) 617-1565

**Email:** [dsps@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dsps@wisconsin.gov)



**Advise individuals to use the [LicenseE portal](#) to apply, check application status and upload documents.**

### Financial Support for Licensing Costs

**While Wisconsin does not currently offer a dedicated state grant for internationally trained nurses, practitioners can direct clients to:**

- Healthcare employers (e.g., Aurora, UW Health): Some offer fee reimbursement or loan repayment for licensed nurses or trainees.

- Wisconsin Nurses Foundation: Occasionally offers scholarships that can be used for continuing education or licensing fees ([wisconsinnurses.org](http://wisconsinnurses.org)).
- The Health Resources and Services Administration for information on the [Nurse Corps Loan Repayment program](#).

### **Real stories – real impact:**

Anh Tran's journey is a strong testament to perseverance and dedication. Originally from Vietnam, she found her calling in nursing, earning her associate degree in Nursing from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and later completing her bachelor's degree at the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay. Her journey did not stop there. She attended graduate school and returned to NWTC as a faculty member. Her story, beautifully captured in this video, showcases her path to accomplished nurse and educator, now serving her community with compassion and educating the next generation. A great story to share with internationally educated nurses looking for inspiration and a clear example of how a career in nursing can flourish through technical college pathways.

[https://youtu.be/y27\\_UzTmk5I?si=DdN5cSOSrM8vgIPH](https://youtu.be/y27_UzTmk5I?si=DdN5cSOSrM8vgIPH)





### **Chapter 3: Strength-based Intake and Early Advising**

Internationally trained nurses bring a wide range of professional experience and knowledge to Wisconsin's health care workforce. However, without early, intentional advising, these strengths often go unrecognized or underutilized. As a result, individuals may face delays in licensure, pursue unrelated careers, or become discouraged. An early, strengths-based intake process can help community partners, career navigators and other practitioners better support nurses as they begin the pathway toward practicing in the United States.

## Why Early Advising Matters

[Early advising can uncover prior education, credentials and career goals that can be used to develop a personalized plan.](#) It also helps clarify eligibility for Wisconsin's three main licensure pathways for nurses, saving time and resources. Most importantly, this approach affirms the identity and experience of the individual from the start, supporting motivation and long-term career engagement.

Note! English language skills are essential to successfully achieving career success in the U.S. For many nursing career options, high-level English skills are a requirement for licensure (see chapter 2) , but most related and alternative career choices are more successfully attained with strong skills in English reading, writing and speaking (see chapter 4). Advising individuals to work on their English skills early on will set them up for greater success along the way.

## Key Components of a Strengths-Based Intake

### 1. Build Trust and Explain the Process

Begin with a warm welcome. Explain that the intake conversation is intended to help understand each individual's background and support their goals. Make it clear that their prior experience is valuable and relevant.

### 2. Use a Structured Intake Form

A structured form can help guide the conversation and ensure consistent data collection. Switchboard offers a [sample tool](#) that can be adapted for Wisconsin.

This information can be collected during an initial appointment or integrated into a program's enrollment process.

### 3. Map Background to Wisconsin Licensure Pathways

Based on intake responses, practitioners can begin to identify which Wisconsin licensure pathway may apply (see more details in chapter 2).

#### 4. Develop a Personalized Action Plan

Once a licensure path has been identified, work with the individual to develop a clear, step-by-step action plan. Consider using a SMART sheet such as the one listed in the World Education Nursing guide [World Education SMART Goal template \(see end of guide\)](#) here. The plan should include specific tasks, estimated timelines and connections to local partners who can assist with each step.

#### 5. Refer to Local and Statewide Resources

Practitioners should consider preparing a resource list that includes:

- Financial assistance for testing or credentialing
- Community-based English language programs
- NCLEX preparation classes
- Peer mentors or immigrant-led networks
- Employers or training providers offering bridge programs



Consider this resource template and personalize as needed: [Practitioner Worksheet: Statewide Resources for Internationally Trained Nurses in Wisconsin](#)

In Wisconsin, some health systems and technical colleges offer immigrant-inclusive supports. Foundations such as the [Wisconsin Nurses Foundation](#) may also offer scholarships or continuing education funds.

Practitioners should continue affirming the nurse's professional identity and skills, even if the licensure process takes time. Encouragement, timely reminders, and referrals can make a significant difference.

#### **Real stories – real impact:**

Originally a midwife in Ghana, Emefa Arisiya emigrated to the United States in 2018 and overcame cultural, academic and personal hurdles to earn her nursing degree from UW - Oshkosh. With support from writing labs, multicultural centers and faculty members, she thrived and was the class speaker at her graduation. Reflecting on her journey, Emefa shared

*“Our journey was not about crossing borders; it was about crossing boundaries that existed within us. We juggled language barriers, cultural differences and the weight of homesickness. Some of us worked tirelessly, often holding multiple jobs to support ourselves – all while pursuing our dreams of becoming nurses.”*

Today, she brings the same resilience, cultural competence and clinical expertise to underserved communities in Wisconsin. Her story illustrates how career pathways and wrap-around support systems enable internationally trained professionals to meet urgent healthcare needs and strengthen local care delivery.

[Read Emefa's story](#)



## Chapter 4: Transferrable Skills and Using them in Related or Alternative Careers

If a direct route to a licensed nursing position is not attainable at this time due to financial constraints, limited English proficiency, time away from practice, or delays in credential evaluation, you can help internationally educated nurses (IENs) [explore alternative and related careers in health care](#).

These roles may not require full RN licensure, but they allow individuals to apply their existing experience, earn income, contribute meaningfully to the health system and build local networks. Many are used as stepping stones toward eventual licensure or as long-term career alternatives.

In addition, it is important to be aware that most healthcare professions include health and safety requirements — such as medical clearances, background checks, or other screenings — that may create additional steps to navigate before employment.

## **Begin with Transferable Skills**

As a practitioner, start the conversation by affirming the individual's existing professional identity and highlighting the skills they bring from their previous training and work.

Common transferable skills IENs possess:

- Direct patient care
- Health education and counseling
- Infection control
- Medical terminology and documentation
- Crisis communication
- Cross functional team collaboration
- Communication with families and health teams
- Adaptability and cross-cultural awareness
- Emergency response and clinical prioritization

To guide skill identification, consider using [this worksheet](#) or similar transferable skills trackers during intake or advising.

## **Connect Skills to Career Options**

Once strengths are identified, you can guide clients to explore health-related roles that match their skills, English proficiency and training availability. The information below provides a curated list of alternative and related careers in Wisconsin's health care sector.

### **Alternative and Related Health Care Careers in Wisconsin**

For skills needed, tasks involved and typical pay ranges consider reviewing career information on portals such as [Careeronestop.org](#). or [O\\*NET](#).

### **Practitioner Tips for Using the Following Information**

- Match roles to the client's goals and strengths. For example, a midwife may align well with CHW or medical assistant roles.
- Discuss language readiness. Use TABE Class E or informal assessments to determine what roles best match current communication skills.
- Explain training requirements honestly. Many roles require short-term training but not multi-year degrees.

- Include culturally relevant examples. Individuals may better relate to job descriptions if you can connect them to similar responsibilities from their home country.
- Highlight income potential and job demand. Many entry- and mid-level roles offer pathways to advancement.

### **Certified Direct Care Professional (CDCP)**

- Language Requirement: English skills likely needed for employment. Training available in one of the following: English, Hmong, Spanish and soon Congolese
- Education/Training: 30 hours of training
- Licensure/Certification: Optional: Once training is complete, individuals can be added to the Wisconsin Certified Direct Care Professional Registry
- Wisconsin Notes: Specific to Wisconsin – can be a stepping stone to CNA and possibly other nursing careers with additional training and certifications.

### **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)**

- Transferable Skills: Patient care, mobility support, infection control
- Language Requirement: Intermediate English
- Education/Training: 75–120 hours of training
- Licensure/Certification: Required: CNA license and state registry
- Wisconsin Notes: Wisconsin CNA Registry Info Available in English, Hmong, Spanish and Congolese

### **Patient Care Technician (PCT)**

- Transferable Skills: Basic clinical skills, lab work, bedside care
- Language Requirement: Intermediate English
- Education/Training: Varies by employer (cert. preferred)
- Licensure/Certification: Often includes BLS + optional CDCP cert.
- Wisconsin Notes: Offered by many technical colleges

### **Medical Assistant (MA)**

- Transferable Skills: Clinical + admin tasks, vitals, charting
- Language Requirement: Intermediate to advanced English
- Education/Training: Certificate or associate degree
- Licensure/Certification: Optional CMA, CCMA, or RMA cert.
- Wisconsin Notes: HOME | Wisconsin Society of Medical Assistants.  
<https://www.matc.edu/course-catalog/healthcare/medical-assistant.html>

### **Community Health Worker (CHW)**

- Transferable Skills: Health education, outreach, patient navigation
- Language Requirement: Intermediate English; bilingual valued
- Education/Training: Short-term training or on-the-job
- Licensure/Certification: No license required in Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Notes: CHW Core Competency Training (DHS)

### **Home Health Aide / Personal Care Worker (PCW)**

- Transferable Skills: Personal care, ADL support, client safety
- Language Requirement: Basic to intermediate English
- Education/Training: On-the-job or employer-based
- Licensure/Certification: CPR/First Aid preferred
- Wisconsin Notes: Entry-level; high demand

### **Medical Interpreter**

- Transferable Skills: Language fluency, patient communication
- Language Requirement: Advanced English + another language
- Education/Training: 40-hour training preferred
- Licensure/Certification: National certification preferred
- Wisconsin Notes: See CCHI or NBCMI

### **Activity Aide / Life Enrichment Coordinator**

- Transferable Skills: Group facilitation, elder support, engagement
- Language Requirement: Basic to intermediate English
- Education/Training: High school or associate degree
- Licensure/Certification: First Aid or CNA helpful
- Wisconsin Notes: Common in long-term care settings

### **Phlebotomist**

- Transferable Skills: Blood draws, lab protocol, patient care
- Language Requirement: Intermediate English
- Education/Training: Certificate (1 semester)
- Licensure/Certification: National cert. (ASCP, NHA) optional
- Wisconsin Notes: WTCS Phlebotomy Programs

### **Care Coordinator (non-clinical)**

- Transferable Skills: Patient navigation, documentation, referrals
- Language Requirement: Advanced English
- Education/Training: Bachelor's preferred

- Licensure/Certification: No licensure if non-clinical
- Wisconsin Notes: Roles in clinics, social services, or hospitals

### Health Information Specialist / Medical Records Tech

- Transferable Skills: Record-keeping, HIPAA compliance
- Language Requirement: Intermediate English
- Education/Training: Certificate or associate degree
- Licensure/Certification: RHIT or AHIMA cert. optional
- Wisconsin Notes: Often less patient facing



For additional alternative or related careers see [Career Pathways in Nursing: Using Your Education in the United States](#)

### Where to Find Training and Support in Wisconsin

Resource	Website	Services
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families	<a href="#">Employment Services for Parents</a>	Directory of statewide employment services
Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS)	<a href="#">wtcsystem.edu</a>	Phlebotomy, MA, CNA, health IT programs and other health programs
Job Center of Wisconsin	<a href="#">jobcenterofwisconsin.com</a>	Career coaching, résumé help, WIOA training funds
Wisconsin 211	<a href="#">211wisconsin.org</a>	Search wraparound support: ESL, housing, transportation
Literacy Network – Madison	<a href="#">litnetwork.org</a>	ESL for health professionals, job readiness
Employ Milwaukee	<a href="#">employmilwaukee.org</a>	Workforce training and referrals in Milwaukee area

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Services</b>
Wisconsin Nurses Foundation	<a href="http://wisconsinnurses.org/foundation">wisconsinnurses.org/foundation</a>	Scholarships for IENs pursuing training or exams
Wisconsin Integrated Education and Training	<a href="#">Wisconsin-IET-Development-Guide.pdf</a>	Statewide IET training overview



## Chapter 5: Gaining U.S. work experience, Social Capital and Career Planning Resources

While many IENs arrive with strong clinical background, they often face barriers beyond licensure such as unfamiliarity with U.S. workplace culture, limited social networks and little or no local work experience. These barriers can delay the career aspirations individuals may have, but with the right information, guidance and support, IENs can overcome these barriers sooner and with greater confidence.

For an in-depth discussion on how to support internationally trained immigrants in any profession, see the Supporting Global Talent and Strengthening Local Workforces in Wisconsin E-Guide.

### Workforce Readiness

Workforce readiness includes the soft and digital skills needed to thrive in U.S. professional settings. You can offer or refer IENs to:

- Workplace English programs (ESL contextualized for health care)
- Career readiness workshops (résumé writing, mock interviews, digital literacy)
- Cultural orientation for the health care workplace (communication norms, patient-centered care, teamwork)
- Conflict resolution and professional communication training



Tip: Look for contextualized ESL classes at Wisconsin technical colleges or adult education providers that include vocabulary, role plays, and tasks aligned with health care careers.

### Gaining U.S.-Based Work Experience

Having U.S. health care experience on a résumé, whether paid or volunteer, can make a significant difference for IENs seeking licensure or transition to related roles.

Pathways to experience include:

- Volunteer roles at clinics, hospitals, blood drives, or long-term care homes

- Paid roles such as CNA, personal care aide, patient care technician, or medical interpreter
- Job-shadowing opportunities arranged through employer or community partnerships
- Fellowship or internship programs like those piloted by organizations such as the [African Bridge Network](#).
- The [Aspirus training program](#) offers guaranteed placement and tuition support—a good entry point for IENs preparing for licensure in Wisconsin.

Tip: Use informational interviews and mock interviews as low-pressure ways to help IENs engage with the health care field and build confidence.

### **Building Social Capital**

Social capital (the connections, networks, and relationships that help individuals navigate systems) is a key success factor for any professional in the U.S., but harder to build for immigrants and refugees who are new to the country. [With approximately 80% of jobs to be achieved through networking](#), building social capital is essential to long-term career success.

As a practitioner, you can support social capital development by:

- Connecting clients to peer mentoring programs (e.g., Wisconsin Nurses Association, immigrant-led networks)
- Facilitating networking events with employers or credentialed professionals
- Encouraging LinkedIn use and professional association membership
- Organizing panel discussions where IENs hear directly from nurses who have successfully navigated re-licensure or pivoted to related careers
- Partnering with faith-based groups, diaspora organizations, or alumni networks that already have built trust

Model to Explore: [The Welcome Back Initiative](#), a national network that seeks to build the bridge between healthcare providers already in the U.S. and the need for culturally inclusive health care services in underserved areas, builds community and peer support into its cohort model to reduce isolation and share information among IENs ([learn more](#)).

## Practitioner Action Tips

Challenge	Practitioner Response
IEN does not have recent U.S. work experience	Help identify low-barrier volunteer or CNA roles aligned with their long-term goals
IEN feels isolated or unsure of next steps	Connect them with mentoring, alumni groups, or local IEN networks
IEN is unfamiliar with U.S. hiring norms	Provide mock interviews, LinkedIn help, and résumé feedback with cultural framing

U.S. specific workforce readiness and social capital are often overlooked, yet they are critical components of successful career transitions for IENs. By supporting both, you help individuals move from being qualified in theory to being trusted and visible in practice.

[Career Planning Resources](#)

As a practitioner working with internationally educated nurses (IENs), your support plays a vital role in helping individuals make informed decisions about licensing, employment and long-term professional growth in Wisconsin's health care sector. Below is a curated list of Career Planning Resources you can personalize and use as needed.

### 1. National Career Planning Resources

#### World Education Services (WES)

- [Career Pathways Guide for Internationally Educated Nurses](#)
- [Credential evaluations and planning tools for health professionals](#)
- [Fostering Inclusive Pathways into the Health Care Workforce](#)

#### Upwardly Global

- Free online job readiness programs for skilled immigrants
- 1:1 job coaching and career licensing guidance
- Employer connections for health professionals

#### My Next Move – Health Care Explorer

- Job descriptions, tasks, skill requirements, and certifications

- Helps IENs identify transferable skills and related careers

## **2. Wisconsin-Specific Career Planning Resources**

### **Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD)**

- [Job Center of Wisconsin](#)
- Access to WIOA career planners, job listings, résumé support, and training programs
- [Wisconsin 211](#)

### **WTCS Nursing Programs**

### **WI Department of Children and Families Bureau of Refugee Services Local Refugee & Immigrant Organizations**

#### **English Language Learning Resources**

- [WTCS Colleges](#)- select the college in your district for more information
- WI Literacy

### **Wisconsin Nurses Foundation**

- Scholarships for continuing education, NCLEX preparation, and licensure costs

**Practitioner Worksheet: WI Career Exploration and Planning: Nursing.** Use this fillable worksheet to guide career planning with learners. It can be printed or adapted into a Google Form or Word document.



## Chapter 6: Engaging with Employers

### Why Employer Engagement Matters

Employers (particularly hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics and home health agencies) are essential partners in building inclusive career pathways for internationally educated nurses (IENs). While many employers express concerns about health care labor shortages, they may be unaware of the existing talent – immigrant and refugee – within their communities.

Engaging employers early, equipping them with practical strategies and helping them see IENs as an asset can lead to win-win outcomes:

- Workforce stability for employers
- Career re-entry or career mobility for IENs
- Improved patient care and cultural competency for the community

In Wisconsin, the demand is urgent. According to the Wisconsin Center for Nursing, more than 10,000 nurses are projected to leave the workforce by 2025, with severe shortages in rural and long-term care settings ([Wisconsin Center for Nursing, 2023](#)). Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development also reports persistent demand for CNAs, home health aides and medical assistants statewide ([Wisconsin DWD](#)).

## **Strategies to Engage Employers in Wisconsin**

### **1. Start with Workforce Data and Local Needs**

Frame your outreach around concrete challenges Wisconsin employers are facing:

- The growing nursing shortage
- High turnover in support roles
- The need for linguistically and culturally responsive care in diverse communities

Use data from the Wisconsin Center for Nursing and DWD to ground your conversations with regional partners.

### **2. Highlight Success Stories and Proven Models**

Employers may be more receptive if they see what has worked elsewhere.

#### **African Bridge Network – Internationally Trained Health Fellowship Model (Massachusetts)**

Hospitals were able to fill needed healthcare gaps by partnering with the African Bridge Network (ABN). ABN created a 12-week fellowship program that places internationally trained health professionals—including nurses—into observation and mentorship roles within U.S. hospitals. Fellows gain hands-on exposure and local work references, while employers benefit from diverse, motivated talent.

Learn more [here](#).

#### **CNA-to-RN Pipelines in Wisconsin**

Several Wisconsin health care employers already invest in internal advancement pathways by supporting entry-level workers like CNAs through tuition reimbursement, shift flexibility

and access to technical college programs. These models work especially well for internationally educated nurses who start in support roles while working toward U.S. licensure.

#### [Aspirus Paid CNA Training Program](#)

In partnership with Mid-State Technical College and other regional colleges, Aspirus Health Care offers a paid Certified Nursing Assistant program. Participants receive full tuition, materials, scrubs, a stipend, and are guaranteed employment at Aspirus upon completion. This customized training includes clinical placement at local hospitals and has launched in locations such as Wisconsin Rapids and Stevens Point.

#### [North Shore Health & WisCaregiver Careers Program](#)

North Shore Health collaborates with WisCaregiver Careers to offer free CNA training, paid training hours and a \$500 retention bonus after six months of employment. The program includes tuition reimbursement for those progressing toward LPN or RN study.

### **3. Position IENs as a Strategic Asset**

When engaging employers, emphasize the unique strengths IENs offer, including:

- Multilingual communication
- Deep clinical knowledge from global practice
- High adaptability and resilience
- Commitment to health care service
- Cultural familiarity with diverse patient populations

You can also reference employer-facing resources on inclusive hiring such as:

- [Switchboard's Employer Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [TENT - U.S. Employer's Guide to Hiring Refugees](#)
- [World Education Services - Workforce Navigation Programs Fostering Inclusive Economies Across States](#)

### **4. Offer Practical Engagement Ideas for Employers**

- Host roundtables or info sessions with trusted intermediaries (community colleges, workforce boards, CBOs)

- Customize fellowship or mentorship pilots (see ABN model above)
- Provide onboarding checklists that address cultural orientation and U.S. clinical expectations
- Help employers access training subsidies through local, state, or federal grants. As of July 2025, [PELL can be used for short-term training](#).

**Practitioner Action Steps**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>
Identify employers already hiring immigrants	Reach out to long-term care homes, FQHCs and hospital HR managers
Connect them to local workforce boards	Coordinate on upskilling or placement programs
Use data and stories to pitch partnerships	Focus on what works and how IENs meet workforce needs
Co-develop small pilots or career pathways	Use examples from ABN or CNA-to-RN ladder programs



## Chapter 7: Resources for Asset Mapping and Partnering

As a practitioner supporting immigrants and refugees (including IENs) you are not working alone. You are part of a broader ecosystem of education, workforce development, health care, adult education and community-based services that must be aligned, responsive, and informed by the voices of those for whom we advocate.

Our collective job is to identify, strengthen and connect the resources that already exist in our communities. Asset Mapping and building partnerships can be initiated by any partner within the ecosystem. Asset mapping allows practitioners to:

- Identify existing services and organizational strengths
- Discover gaps in support, including licensure navigation, language assistance, and child or transportation support
- Build integrated referral pathways across sectors
- Strengthen connections between local workforce development, educational institutions, employers and community organizations

In Wisconsin, where health care workforce shortages are acute, asset mapping is more than administrative work - It can be a strategy for system alignment.

### **Use Asset Mapping Tools**

World Education Services provides a practical, adaptable guide for communities to map assets and identify needs.

#### **[WES Asset Mapping Resource: Mapping Assets and Identifying Gaps](#)**

#### **Use this tool to:**

- Facilitate conversations with local partners
- Collect data on existing supports for IENs
- Analyze service duplication or absence by area or sector
- Develop shared goals and referral pathways

### **Highlighting the Welcome Back Center Model**

The [Welcome Back Center \(WBC\)](#) is an example of how asset mapping translates into collaborative programming. The WBC offers tailored English instruction, clinical orientation and ongoing language support for internationally trained nurses. Through partnerships with colleges, employers and community organizations, WBCs have successfully created pipelines to health careers.

Learn more: [Switchboard's "Rebuilding Careers: Programs Supporting Internationally Trained Newcomers"](#) -which features the WBC as a promising model .

### **Wisconsin-Specific Partners to Map and Engage**

As you develop your asset map, consider including partners such as :

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Technical Colleges	WTCS campuses offering CNE, MA, Phlebotomy or CNA programs
Job Centers (WIOA)	Local offices coordinating training funds and employer connections

Sector	Examples
Community-Based Organizations	Refugee/immigrant agencies (e.g., Catholic Charities, IIW of Wisconsin)
Health Care Employers	Hospitals, nursing homes with internal advancement models (e.g. <a href="#">Leading Age</a> , Aspirus, North Shore Health)
Literacy & Adult Education	Regionally based ESL and career-readiness providers (consider connecting with your technical college or DWD for programs in your area)
Peer/Immigrant Networks	Mentorship programs such as those offered by the Wisconsin Nurses Foundation

Mapping these resources allows you to create a clearer ecosystem for supporting IENs into employment or licensure pathways.

### Steps to Build Partnerships in Wisconsin

1. Organize a stakeholder session to review your asset map and identify shared goals
2. Invite IENs to the table—their insight will focus the partnership on real-world barriers
3. Define roles and responsibilities, e.g., who provides ESL, who links to employers, who mentors
4. Pilot a partnership model—such as a welcome-back-style cohort, CNA-to-RN pathway, or employer shadowing placement
5. Gather feedback and iterate—use participant input to improve and scale

## Appendix - Worksheets

### Practitioner Worksheet: WI Career Exploration and Planning: Nursing

#### Career Exploration & Planning

#### Longterm Career Goal:

Action Step	Notes
Identify short-term employment options	Example: CDCP, CNA, PCT, CHW

Review <a href="#">My Next Move</a> together	Explore alternative pathways
Research local training programs	ESL, bridge, refresher programs
Refer to Upwardly Global or local navigator	If applicable

### Wisconsin-Specific Supports

Need	Referred To	Notes
Job Search & Résumé Help	<a href="#">Job Center of WI</a>	
Wraparound Support (childcare, housing)	<a href="#">211 Wisconsin</a>	
ESL or Bridge Programs		
Local Peer Mentors or Employer Networks		

### Financial Support

Resource	Applied?	Notes
Wisconsin Nurses Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<a href="http://wisconsinnurses.org">wisconsinnurses.org</a>
WIOA Funds via Job Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Contact local job center
Community-Based Support	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	e.g., workforce boards, local grants

## Practitioner Worksheet: Statewide Resources for Internationally Educated Nurses in Wisconsin

Instructions: Use this worksheet to gather and track key resources that may support your client’s licensure journey. Complete it during or after your intake and early advising session. This worksheet can be revisited throughout the process and updated as needs or eligibility changes.

### 1. Credential Evaluation

<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose an evaluation service	TruMerit (formerly CGFNS) recommended for nursing	<a href="http://Trumerit.org">Trumerit.org</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit transcripts and documents	Verify if official documents are required from home country	
<input type="checkbox"/> Track evaluation status	Add account login info if needed. Note timeline for evaluation.	

## 2. English Language Proficiency (if applicable)

<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Testing Center or Program</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine if testing is required	Only for applicants whose education was not in English	
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose a test (TOEFL, IELTS, etc.)	Confirm that test meets Wisconsin Board of Nursing standards	
<input type="checkbox"/> Find test preparation classes		
<input type="checkbox"/> Register and prepare for test	Note date and location	

## 3. Licensure Pathway in Wisconsin

<b>Pathway</b>	<b>Applicable?</b>	<b>Next Step</b>	<b>Resource Link</b>
Temporary Permit	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No	Apply via LicenseE portal	<a href="http://license.wi.gov">license.wi.gov</a>
Limited License for Refresher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No	Identify a Board-approved program	<a href="#">Refresher Courses PDF</a>

Alternative Education Path (N 2.10(2m))	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No	Review eligibility and gather documents	<a href="#">Administrative Code N 2.10(2m)</a>
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#### 4. NCLEX-RN Registration and Preparation

Task	Notes	Resource
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify prep resources	Online classes, local colleges, or community orgs	
<input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to register for NCLEX	There are strict ID requirements and timelines. There is a Candidate Bulletin with helpful tips Through Pearson VUE	<a href="http://pearsonvue.com/nclex">pearsonvue.com/nclex</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Decide on test date	Add exam date: _____	

#### 5. Financial Assistance for Licensure or Training

Program/Source	Eligibility	Contact	Notes
Wisconsin Nurses Foundation Scholarships	Continuing education or certification	<a href="http://wisconsinnurses.org">wisconsinnurses.org</a>	Deadlines vary
Employer-sponsored tuition or fee assistance	Ask about NCLEX reimbursement or credentialing funds	Local health systems	Include contact name if known
Community-based workforce funds	Check with local WDB or job center	Job Center of Wisconsin	<a href="http://jobcenterofwisconsin.com">jobcenterofwisconsin.com</a>

#### 6. Local ESL or Career Programs

Program Name	Services Offered	Location / Contact
Example: Literacy Network (Madison)	ESL for health care professionals	<a href="http://litnetwork.org">litnetwork.org</a>

Example: Technical College Health program courses		
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### 7. Peer Mentorship and Immigrant-Led Networks

Program or Contact	Type of Support	Notes
Example: African Association of Madison	Cultural and career support	
Example: Local IEN peer mentor	NCLEX preparation support	Add mentor name or program

### 8. Follow-Up Plan

Date	Task	Practitioner Notes
___	Check NCLEX registration status	
___	Referral to ESL program	
___	Resume review or interview prep	
___	Application submitted to DSPS	

Practitioner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Initial Advising Session: \_\_\_\_\_

Next Check-In Scheduled For: \_\_\_\_\_

## Practitioner Worksheet \_ WI Career Exploration and Planning: Nursing Career Exploration & Planning

Action Step	Notes
Identify short-term employment options	Example: CNA, PCT, CHW
Review <a href="#">My Next Move</a> together	Explore alternative pathways
Research local training programs	ESL, bridge, refresher programs
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### Wisconsin-Specific Supports

Need	Referred To	Notes
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ESL or Bridge Programs		
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