

## Strategic Plan for 2023-2026

Approved – July 10, 2023

---

### 1. Introduction

*“Thousands of internationally educated nurses are living in Canada and struggling with the complex, costly and time-consuming registration process preventing them from working as nurses. .... Streamlined application processes, along with facilitating the employment and integration process for these nurses, can not only increase the workforce in a timely manner but also add rich cultural representation to organizations that are serving an increasingly diversified public.” - Canadian Nurse, article by Emily Durant MN, RN – April 17, 2023 [<https://www.canadian-nurse.com/blogs/cn-content/2023/04/17/solutions-to-tackle-nursing-shortage>]*

Emily Durant’s April 17, 2023 article in the Canadian Nurse entitled “Solutions to tackle the nursing shortage and burnout immediately: A review of the literature” paints a stark picture. “Half of nurses currently working wish to change jobs. Ninety-four percent are showing signs of burnout, and 83 percent say they are so understaffed they worry for the quality of care they can provide” (Ahmed & Bourgeault, 2022). Durant has compiled a list of actions that can begin to address the big issues of adequate staffing and resources. The second of the five proposed actions is quoted above: to integrate nurses in Canada with international education and training.

In their public-facing message to the Prime Minister and the Premiers in February 2023, Canada’s nursing leadership publicly stated their desire to offer solutions – in a statement entitled “Fixing nursing shortages to fix health care” [<https://nursesunions.ca/canadas-nurses-to-the-prime-minister-and-premiers-fix-nursing-shortages-to-fix-health-care/>]. Within their list of recommendations were these:

“Enhanced financial supports, help transitioning students and IENs into the workforce, and providing experienced nurses with the time to mentor graduates are concrete measures we are proposing to recruit and retain a new generation of nurses –with better representation from Indigenous and racially diverse communities – to match rapidly growing demand.”

CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses (CARE Centre) lives and breathes the reality captured in these statements every day. Coupled with the urgency of the health human resources crisis and the major challenges facing health care systems across the country in a post-pandemic world, this is a pivotal time to create a new strategic Plan to guide action and deliver impact.

CARE Centre’s strategic plan for 2020-2023 focused its directions on two internal initiatives: maintaining an organization with financial stability and professionalism at its core and transforming the organization by providing a blended learning and flexible service delivery model.

This capacity-building focus turned out to be a silver lining as CARE Centre was able to activate on many of the strategic objectives despite, and, at times because of, the unexpected reality of the pandemic's implications.

Fast forward to 2023. There is urgency for CARE Centre to build on its recognized expertise, credibility, and niche to leverage the opportunity of the competing crises playing out in the health care and immigration spheres. CARE Centre is well-positioned to be a vital voice for internationally educated nurses (IENs) on behalf of the nursing profession and to influence long overdue system change, with the potential for far-reaching impact.

This strategic plan supports CARE Centre to build on its strengths delivering services to IENs and preparing them and employers for successful integration. On an individual level, we know that CARE Centre creates an essential supportive environment for IENs who have lost their professional networks and supports through their dislocation and relocation. CARE Centre effectively cultivates the ground with employers, supporting them to leverage the strength and resilience of IENs as they integrate and become equipped to survive and thrive on their own, and then to mentor others as they themselves become rooted as leaders.

As we look to the future, CARE Centre is heeding an urgent call to lead from its position as a credible, respected service provider and advocate for lasting change, on behalf of and in partnership with IENs like Gladys and Clinical Educators like Joel:

*"I came to Canada 7 years ago and always dreamt of continuing my nursing profession. With the help of other IENs, I learned about CARE Centre and true enough, they guided my journey in achieving my dream to become a nurse in Canada. From becoming a RPN to RN, CARE for Nurses has been part of each milestone. When I was **preparing** for CELBAN and IENCAP in 2019, my case manager provided resources that helped in my success. Presently, I am working as a Registered Nurse in Niagara Region. CARE Centre will always be part of my journey as I will take advantage of the lifetime membership. CARE Centre has been very helpful and a great support to us IENs in fulfilling our dreams of becoming nurses in Canada. Thank you very much for all your support."*

-Gladys Abalos Soriano, RN. Care Centre Member since 2017- Hamilton Office

*IENs bring fresh perspectives. IENs who speak other languages have the unique ability to connect with patients who don't speak English which can benefit nurse-patients' relationships immensely. IENs are given orientation by our professional practice team who help to bridge the gap between practice in Canada vs. their home country. This helps create relationships among IENs.*

-Joel Pinto, Clinical Educator – Trillium Health Partners

## **2. Painting the picture of our future – what will CARE Centre look like?**

To inform our picture of CARE Centre's future, guidance and insights were sought from CARE Centre's clients through an online survey conducted in February 2023, and from seven stakeholders through one-on-one interviews conducted by a consultant in February and March 2023. Themes from these two audiences alongside those that surfaced from the participatory processes with the Board and staff in March and April 2023 created the backdrop against which we have painted a picture of our future state.

## **The future:**

CARE Centre's unique strength is its deep understanding of internationally educated and qualified nurses. This expertise draws stakeholders to partner with us and attracts clients to our programs. CARE Centre's impact over the next three to five years will be experienced in multiple ways.

At the health care system level:

- Through its leadership in addressing urgent needs for effective, qualified nurses in the healthcare system, the depth of experience and knowledge of IENs will be understood as an essential component of the healthcare workforce.
- By leveraging its provincial strengths and leadership position to enable a pan-Canadian approach, CARE Centre's programming will reach across the country, building on the strength of the pre-arrival program's pan-Canadian partnership with stakeholders, bridging and settlement referral partners in Ontario.
- CARE Centre's influence will change the healthcare environment to be more culturally diverse and inclusive, with care providers reflecting the diversity of the communities being cared for.

By the nursing profession nationally:

- With workforce readiness and entry-to-practice requirements for internationally educated and qualified nurses, they are highly recognized and esteemed.
- By shifting the understanding of who IENs are – highly-skilled professionals with expertise – the nursing profession's leaders of today and tomorrow.

At the employer level:

- By equipping employers to address unconscious bias and change the face of their organizations, through CARE Centre's leadership in diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

By individual IENs:

- Whose lives, and their families' lives, will be enhanced through their positive employment and leadership experiences.

### **3. Key emerging issues described in the CARE Centre stakeholder interviews**

Respondents were asked to share the top three issues facing the sector now and as they look ahead three years, and to identify the issue of greatest importance from their perspective. The top three issues affecting the environment in which CARE Centre operates, as described in the stakeholder interview report, are as follows:

#### **i. Health human resources crisis.**

Health human resources are in crisis, with urgent shortages and challenges system-wide in recruitment and retention, regardless of sub-sector (hospital, long-term care, home, and community care, etc.). This crisis isn't new. According to Michael Villeneuve, CEO of CNA (retired), "Shortages were predicted because of the baby boom curve, back in 2000: to be short 60,000 RNs by 2022. The COVID pandemic accelerated and compounded a problem that was already in our sights through years of underfunding, worsening working conditions and more nurses leaving the profession." The impact of staffing shortages has exacerbated the overwhelming workloads and burnout post-COVID.

## **ii. Standardization of the registration process nationally.**

IENs have faced significant challenges of lengthy and complex registration processes, integration, and smooth transition into the Canadian workforce. Today, rapid changes in the licensing process are underway. Every province is competing for IENs, offering different incentives to attract and retain nurses. Regulatory changes designed to make it easier to work in provincial jurisdictions are being introduced to address staffing shortages, with a focus on those already living in Canada but not working in their field due to regulatory barriers. If the licensing issues are addressed effectively, there will be a major opportunity for IENs as part of the solution.

## **iii. Support for IENs to be successful in employment.**

There are insufficient supports for IENs to integrate successfully once hired. IENs face onboarding processes that are less than ideal – due to senior nurses leaving through attrition, a core group of nurses who have worked through the pandemic who are ‘silent quitting’ due to burnout, and staff shortages. It is widely known that new nurses coming in, both domestic graduates and IENs, are not receiving the ideal level of required mentorship and support as they onboard, which can have multiple negative implications, including attrition, as nurses leave positions for which they were not adequately trained and supported.

## **4. Our Vision, Mission, and Values**

With this 2023-2026 strategic plan, CARE Centre’s vision and mission statements have been updated to reflect our aspirations and integral role, and a tagline, core purpose statement and motto have been confirmed as supporting elements to describe our work and intentions.

### **Our Vision:**

Internationally educated nurses are leaders in the profession and integral to the effectiveness of Canada’s health care system.

### **Our Mission:**

To strengthen Canada’s health care system by leading in the development and integration of a culturally diverse, inclusive, and effective health care workforce in which internationally educated nurses contribute their expertise and fulfil their leadership potential.

### **Tagline, Core Purpose Statement and Motto:**

The following Tagline, Core Purpose Statement and Motto support our new Vision and Mission:

### **Tagline:**

Supporting Nurses Back into Practice

**Core Purpose Statement:**

We are committed to:

- Be a leading voice for internationally educated nurses in Canada;
- Maximize and promote the internationally educated nurse's essential role within the Canadian health care system;
- Contribute to effective long-term solutions for the healthcare workforce through sharing of our knowledge and expertise; and
- Create professional pathways to enable full and effective integration of internationally educated nurses, today and tomorrow.

**Motto:**

IENs' success is our success.

**Our Values Statement:**

As we look to the future, we remain committed to our values and to actively living by example. Our values guide us daily and are at the core of our organizational culture.

We believe in being ...

**Respectful** with each other, and with our clients, partners, and supporters.

**Collaborative**, by listening, learning, and working together as a team to fulfill our goals.

**Compassionate**, by showing understanding for the lives of those we serve.

**Accountable**, as a staff and board to our clients, our funders, and our purpose.

**Professional**, in all aspects of our work, demonstrating high standards of ethics and integrity.

**Inclusive**, by championing equity, diversity, and access as a culturally competent organization, serving as a role model and advocating for change.

## 5. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

CARE Centre’s Board of Directors and staff team each developed an analysis of our internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats that we must navigate. The master overview below integrates this work and has guided the development of a Strategic Plan that strives to capitalize on CARE Centre’s strengths, address its weaknesses, leverage emerging opportunities, and mitigate the threats CARE Centre faces.

### Comprehensive overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats:

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses (Internal Limitations)</u>
<p><b>Niche &amp; Credibility:</b> Only non-profit focused on one occupation and specific needs of IENs; niche we own; positioned well; independence; core value proposition; brand recognition beyond Ontario through pre-arrival program, and through research activities and publication.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> Track record of success (back to 2001); depth of experience with IENs.</p> <p><b>Knowledge &amp; expertise of system:</b> Content leadership; system partnerships; reputation for good research.</p> <p><b>Program model:</b> Case management model; training offerings; nimble program creation; experience with geographically distributed delivery. Continuum of professional supports from registration to networking; national scope of PASS.</p> <p><b>Staffing:</b> Qualified staff, many with lived experience as IENs; diversity (multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-generational, inter-disciplinary); technically capable; effective teams; adaptability; able to pivot quickly.</p> <p><b>Board:</b> Knowledgeable; respected; experts in the field; diverse.</p> <p><b>Partnerships:</b> Strong relationships; employer connections; workplace transition curriculum; growing interest in partnering with us.</p>	<p><b>Brand recognition, marketing &amp; awareness:</b> Brand isn’t clear and unequivocal; we don’t own our brand externally – others are branding us; low visibility online; limited marketing budget means limited capacity to market services; not equipping potential clients to understand our programs and services (common saying by new clients: “I wish I knew about CARE sooner”).</p> <p><b>Disconnected from immigration entities:</b> No connection between immigration process and post-arrival services offered and provided; not listed on immigration related websites.</p> <p><b>Operational Capacity:</b> Historic focus was licensing/registration; with CNO changes, needing to stay current; ensuring we have the tools/frameworks for scaling up (from data analysis to Theory of Change, logic models, outcome chains, etc.); our outreach in the province/GTA-centricity.</p> <p><b>Human Resources (HR) limitations:</b> Ability to address competitive environment for HR including compensation, benefits, recruitment, and retention; limited professional development supports; sufficient staffing to support new directions and priorities; high staff turnover recently.</p> <p><b>Funding:</b> Competition for funding; limitations placed by funders.</p>

<p><b><u>Opportunities (External)</u></b></p> <p><b>Health system crisis and nursing shortage:</b> Unique opportunity for CARE Centre to lead and provide solutions with the demand for nurses escalating; influence the immigration system; employers hiring; media attention on the issues; immigration levels.</p> <p><b>National scope/Geographic reach/inter-provincial mobility:</b> National programming post-arrival for the new 2025 contract (start working on it in 2024); pan-Canadian nursing licensure (Ontario paving the way).</p> <p><b>Marketing and branding/program visibility:</b> Strengthen our brand identity; increase understanding of value and benefits of CARE Centre; national/international outreach; link our website to CNO/stakeholders; increase focus on community outreach for new immigrant populations; those sponsoring their own members; IRCC organizations.</p> <p><b>Funding:</b> Seeking new supporters to enable the employer part of the equation; finding funds to eliminate cost barriers; funds to broaden mandate.</p> <p><b>Knowledge leadership:</b> Participate in more research and studies; collaborate with academic institutions; build partnerships with similar organizations.</p> <p><b>New employer offerings (revenue generating ideas):</b> Offer employers (for \$\$) IEN onboarding and workforce integration support (language, integration, documentation, soft skills); specialized services to assist in transition; support work integration and sustainability, not just licensing.</p> <p><b>New program offerings for clients:</b> ICELBAN/CELBAN preparation for pre-arrival; create CARE Centre phone app for pre- and post-arrival; adapt to CNO changes for IENs' benefit; new programs for SPEP, language requirements; hybrid model reach.</p> <p><b>IEN Community:</b> Create an online community; leverage the legacy of CARE alumni.</p>	<p><b><u>Threats (External Challenges)</u></b></p> <p><b>Funding/Funder restrictions:</b> Agreements behind the times; restrictions on our marketing/approvals; IENs can't be in two bridging programs at once: a funder issue with negative implications; insufficient funds to cover costs; funding renewal questions.</p> <p><b>Low brand recognition:</b> Limits us in attracting IENs and potential partners; restricts ability to attract attention and support of new funders (corporate/foundation); IENs mixing us up with CNO; our supports beyond licensure; improper referrals/IENs missing out on our services; outreach outside Ontario; value of CARE Centre services and success stories not recognized (e.g. success of IENCAP course).</p> <p><b>Immigration system complexity:</b> Ensuring our role and competitive value is understood; systemic issues related to language and culture differences; no clear path between immigration and employment; not a seamless governmental pre / post-arrival transition into STARS from PASS.</p> <p><b>Employer limitations:</b> Operating within others' rules; lack of capacity to fully integrate successfully (IENs land in the workplace without transition support).</p> <p><b>Competitive landscape:</b> Need to understand our unique assets in context of the changing landscape of other providers in the space; others with better marketing resources can maximize the opportunity of connecting IENs with employment; assessment changes – a belief that nurses don't need CARE Centre if licensure is expedited (they feel they don't need us), our role in sustaining employment and integration is not recognized.</p> <p><b>Barriers for IENs:</b> Fees that aren't affordable; technology challenges with some clients (computer literacy, access); EOIS; clients need support once employed to integrate/</p>
---	---

<b>Tools and supports for CARE staff:</b> Increase tech support and training; enhance database and software; introduce website features (e.g. Live Chat).	progress; keeping current with changing registration rules.
---	---

## 6. Strategic Directions and Enabling Strategies

Building on the groundwork laid within the 2020-2023 strategic plan, for 2023-2026 we have confirmed two strategic directions, supported by two enabling strategies. The Directions relate to the vision and mission of CARE Centre – its core purpose. The enabling strategies equip CARE Centre to fulfil its cause-related work. For each Direction and Enabling Strategy, Objectives and Actions have been developed, building on the content in the SWOT analysis. Key Performance Indicators will be created to track and report on progress over the three-year period.

### SUMMARY

<b>Strategic Directions</b>	<b>1. System change: Advance solutions to the healthcare human resources crisis with systems-level interventions.</b>	<b>2. Program innovation: Design and deliver innovative, effective programs tailored to the needs of IENs and employers.</b>
<b>Priority Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share expertise, data, and input-based recommendations to drive policy change.</li> <li>2. Provide leadership to government and employers regarding our programs to integrate and sustain nurses in the health care system.</li> <li>3. Collaborate with partners to drive research innovation and system change.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop, expand, monetize, and increase access to tailored programming.</li> <li>2. Advocate with employers regarding talent acquisition, supporting workplace transition for IENs.</li> <li>3. Identify new program audiences and develop relevant program extensions.</li> </ol>

<b>Enabling Strategy One</b>	<p><b>Organizational resilience: Ensure sustainability and effectively respond to changes by exploring and implementing technology, human resources, and revenue solutions.</b></p> <p><u>Priority Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design a human capital model to recruit, foster and retain diverse, skilled, and engaged teams.</li> <li>2. Adopt a digital first strategy built on client service, efficiencies, and best practices.</li> <li>3. Grow and diversify funding and revenue through innovative approaches.</li> </ol>
<b>Enabling Strategy Two</b>	<p><b>Brand presence: Build awareness and increase reach provincially, nationally, and internationally through strategic marketing and communications.</b></p> <p><u>Priority Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define and strengthen brand identity to increase brand recognition over time.</li> </ol>



	2. Grow awareness of CARE Centre’s differentiation, strengthening program outreach. 3. Increase visibility as a leader with compelling expertise on issues impacting IENs.
--	---

**Barriers to consider in 2023-2026**

While the imperative to deliver on the proposed strategic directions is clear from the consultation process, the SWOT analysis and environmental scan – we recognize the limitations posed by CARE Centre’s current financial and human resource constraints. Its relatively small operating budget belies its aspirations and potential to achieve greater impact, extending beyond its role as expert service provider. Developing a realistic and phased approach to implementation of the strategic plan will be essential.

**Conclusion**

The Board of Directors of CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses believes the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan equips us to fulfil our commitment to be a leading voice for internationally educated nurses; to maximize the internationally educated nurse’s essential role within the Canadian health care system; to contribute to effective long-term solutions for the healthcare workforce; and to create professional pathways to enable full and effective integration of internationally educated nurses, today and tomorrow. We look forward to sharing our progress and achievements towards our aspirations over the next three years.

### Strategic Plan Summary – 2023-2026

<b>Vision</b>	Internationally educated nurses are leaders in the profession and integral to the effectiveness of Canada’s health care system.
<b>Mission</b>	To strengthen Canada’s health care system by leading in the development and integration of a culturally diverse, inclusive, and effective health care workforce in which internationally educated nurses contribute their expertise and fulfil their leadership potential.
<b>Tagline</b>	Supporting Nurses Back into Practice
<b>Motto</b>	IENs’ success is our success.
<b>Core Purpose</b>	<p>We are committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Be a leading voice for internationally educated nurses in Canada;</li> <li>-Maximize the internationally educated nurse’s essential role within the Canadian health care system;</li> <li>-Contribute to effective long-term solutions for the healthcare workforce through sharing of our knowledge and expertise; and</li> <li>-Create professional pathways to enable full and effective integration of internationally educated nurses, today and tomorrow.</li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<p>As we look to the future, we remain committed to our values and to actively living by example. Our values guide us daily and are at the core of our organizational culture. We believe in being ...</p> <p><b>Respectful</b> with each other, and with our clients, partners, and supporters.</p> <p><b>Collaborative</b>, by listening, learning, and working together as a team to fulfill our goals.</p> <p><b>Compassionate</b>, by showing understanding for the lives of those we serve.</p> <p><b>Accountable</b>, as a staff and board to our clients, our funders, and our purpose.</p> <p><b>Professional</b>, in all aspects of our work, demonstrating high standards of ethics and integrity.</p> <p><b>Inclusive</b>, by championing equity, diversity, and access as a culturally competent organization, serving as a role model and advocating for change.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	<p><b>1. System change:</b> Advance solutions to the health care human resources crisis with systems-level interventions.</p> <p><b>2. Program innovation:</b> Design and deliver innovative, effective programs tailored to the needs of IENs and employers</p>
<b>Enabling Strategies</b>	<p><b>1. Organizational resilience:</b> Ensure sustainability and effectively respond to changes by exploring and implementing technology, human resources, and revenue solutions.</p> <p><b>2. Brand presence:</b> Build awareness and increase reach provincially, nationally, and internationally through strategic marketing and communications.</p>

