

Topic: Workforce Data & Analysis, Part 1

Consultants' report on the previous two weeks

Consultants gave a synopsis of recent work over the last weeks as they explored both immediate and long-term funding opportunities. Conversations are underway with possible funders such as the Rasmuson Foundation, the Mat-Su Health Foundation, the Board of Nursing, and AHHA leadership. There was a discussion about the Request For Information (RFI) from the State regarding the new federal Rural Healthcare Transformation grant opportunity. AHHA is including the Nursing Workforce Center in their response to the RFI.

The consultants continue to prepare outreach materials—including a polished pitch deck—to convey the urgency and value of investing in Alaska's nursing workforce.

Workforce Data Review and Analysis

Consultant Patricia Moulton Burwell presented an overview of nursing data across three critical categories: education, supply, and demand. While acknowledging the limitations of current state data, she emphasized the value of trend comparisons and multi-source validation. She also highlighted the strength of local labor market reports and the importance of showing funders measurable impact.

Enrollment Trends and Demographic Data

Enrollment and diversity patterns in nursing programs were reviewed in detail. While pre-licensure enrollments are growing thanks to new programs, disparities in age and diversity persist. Practical Nursing (PN) programs serve a more diverse group of students, while BSN programs fall below national averages. Graduation and NCLEX pass rates remain strong. Faculty data revealed notable variation in full-time and part-time staffing, which may influence program outcomes.

Persistent Gaps in Nursing Education Data

Several education-related data gaps were identified, particularly around post-licensure education, applicant information, and faculty demographics. The consultant recommended new survey tools and enhancements to existing data collection efforts. A steering committee member emphasized that while Alaska's programs are performing well, robust data is necessary to justify increased investment and support for capacity expansion.

Educator Data Collection Challenges

The consultant and a steering committee member discussed the state's fragmented approach to collecting faculty and educator data. Reports to accrediting bodies vary by program, and efforts to improve participation in license renewal surveys have been slow but critical. North Dakota's decade-long journey to full participation was cited as an example of persistence paying off. The APRN Alliance's 2023 survey was highlighted as a best practice.

Nursing Licensure and Residence Trends

Many nurses licensed in Alaska live out of state or work remotely, which complicates workforce projections. Fewer out-of-state nurses are transferring in, and many local nurses leave for higher pay or alternative schedules. This underscores the importance of improving working conditions and offering competitive incentives to retain nurses locally.

Supply, Demand, and Retention Gaps

A persistent shortage of nurses was discussed, with approximately 50% of Alaska's nursing workforce residing elsewhere. While Alaska trains around 364 RNs annually, the state still requires over 3,000 new nurses from outside to meet demand. Seasonal needs during the tourism season further strain workforce capacity. A greater emphasis on retention strategies and graduate tracking is urgently needed.

Aging Workforce and Implications

The consultant presented concerning data on the age of Alaska's nursing workforce. Nearly one-third of LPNs are expected to retire by 2025, while RNs are also aging in alignment with national trends. Diversity among nurses remains lower than state and national benchmarks. This underscores the need for recruitment strategies that intentionally focus on diversity and youth engagement.

Employment Data and Burnout Rates

The vast majority of LPNs and RNs are actively working in the profession, but burnout—especially among LPNs—is a growing concern. Though salaries in Alaska are above the national average, the higher cost of living partly offsets this. Improvements in survey participation and real-time tracking (like E-Notify) could significantly enhance data accuracy and inform retention strategies.

Toward a Statewide Strategy

The meeting concluded with a shared vision: a data-informed strategy to build a resilient, well-supported nursing workforce in Alaska. The consultant will prepare a detailed summary for stakeholders and funders, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive presentation this fall. The next meeting will continue advancing this work, with all members reviewing updated materials and bringing questions for discussion on August 20th.

Action needed:

- Incorporate additional data sources identified by the group into the final report.
- Continue scheduling meetings with potential funding sources, including the Alaska Mental Health Trust, insurance foundations, and hospitals.
- Finalize the one-pager and pitch deck for fundraising opportunities.
- Analyze and present findings on whether Alaska is experiencing a nursing shortage at the next meeting.

Alaska Nursing Workforce Center
Steering Committee Meeting Summary and Notes
August 6, 2025

- Prepare additional demand data and workforce projections for the next meeting.
- Develop a fact sheet summarizing key data points for stakeholders and funders.
- Collect missing nursing education data, particularly on post-licensure graduate programs, applicants, graduates, and faculty.
- Work with nursing programs to collect graduation numbers from the past few years.
- Provide the volunteer hours worksheet and notes to assist with final calculations.
- Share the public radio link about rural healthcare funding opportunities.
- Add the LPN retirement age graph to the presentation deck.
- Distribute updated data presentation slides to all attendees.
- Circulate the complete slide deck prior to the next meeting for review.
- Share the National Forum fact sheet with the consulting team for distribution.