

Hiring More Nurse Practitioners for Long-Term Care

FAQ Document

General

1. What is the Hiring More Nurse Practitioners for Long-Term Care Initiative?

- The Hiring More Nurse Practitioners for Long-Term Care (HMNP) initiative will provide \$57.6 million to long-term care (LTC) homes over the next three years to recruit and retain up to 225 additional nurse practitioners (NPs) in the sector.
- This funding will enable LTC homes to request funding for eligible employment expenses, including salaries, benefits, and overhead costs, for NPs recruited as of April 1, 2022.
- The funding also provides up to \$5,000 in one-time relocation support for NPs hired full-time to work in rural communities with a Rurality Index of Ontario (RIO) score of 40 or over, and who have agreed to a minimum of 12-months of service.

2. What is the role of the NP in the home?

- The nurse practitioner is a primary care provider to residents and should work within their legislative scope of practice as described and outlined by the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- NPs are authorized to diagnose, order and interpret diagnostic tests, and prescribe medication and other treatments.
- In LTC, NPs report directly to the Director of Nursing and Personal Care or Administrator and is accountable to the Medical Director for policies, procedures, and protocols for medical services. A portion of their work can include research, education, and very often, NPs play a leadership-based role.
- Some helpful links and resources on the NP scope of practice, the role of NP in LTC, tools for integrating NPs in LTC can be found here:
 - i. [Attending Nurse Practitioners in Long-Term Care Homes - Recruitment and Integration Toolkit \(gov.on.ca\)](#)
 - ii. [CNO Nurse Practitioner Practice Standard](#)
 - iii. [Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario FAQs](#)

3. Who is eligible for this funding?

- All licensed LTC homes that are a party to the Letter of Agreement for Ministry Direct Funding to LTC Homes are eligible. Eligible LTC homes must formally identify an NP prior to submitting a funding request to the ministry.
- The ministry is able to fund up to 75 NPs per fiscal year. Funding will be provided based on approved requests from homes, and the amount of funding available.

4. How can LTC homes access this funding?

- The HMNP for LTC is a request-based initiative. This means that homes access funding by submitting a funding request to the ministry.

- There are two ways that homes can submit a Funding Request:
 - 1) After the NP FTE has been hired.
 - LTC homes will receive funding after the ministry has approved the funding request, according to the regular payment schedule; **or**
 - 2) After an NP candidate has been formally identified.
 - Licensees will have four (4) weeks from the date of ministry approval to confirm with the ministry that the NP has signed the employment contract.
 - Licensees will receive funding once the ministry has received confirmation of a signed employment contract with the NP, according to the regular payment schedule.
- In both circumstances described above, the ministry will confirm the approval of requests within one month of receipt of a completed Funding Request Form. In some cases, ministry staff may need to reach out for clarification or for additional information.
- Successful requests will be used to create a monthly allocation that is paid out according to the usual payment schedule.

5. What is the effective date for this program? Can funds be requested retroactively if we already have an NP on staff?

- The effective date of the HMNP for LTC Program is April 1, 2022.
- In cases where a home has employed an NP at its own expense as of or after April 1, 2022, those expenses would be eligible for funding, provided all other eligibility requirements set out in the *Hiring More Nurse Practitioners in Long-Term Care Funding Policy* are met.
- Employment costs for NPs funded through other ministry sources are not eligible for funding.

Eligibility and Funding

6. If a home hired an NP prior to April 1, 2022, would they be eligible for funding under the HMNP initiative?

- To be eligible for funding, NPs must have been hired on or after April 1, 2022.

7. How long is the funding term? Do homes need to reapply each year?

- Approved funding will roll over annually into the next fiscal year for the duration of the program, as long as the NP remains in employment at the eligible LTC home and requirements continue to be met. Homes will not need to reapply each year.
- If applicable, homes may also identify an end-date to their requested funding.

8. What requirements will LTC homes need to meet to receive funding for employment expenses?

- Funding must be used to create a new NP FTE, or to increase the hours of an existing NP, for example to convert a part-time NP to full-time.
- NP expenditures are not eligible for funding where funding has already been provided through other sources.
- Funding must be used for employment expenses for an NP in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

9. Do homes still need to hire the NP before applying for funding? How can homes be sure that funding will be approved?

- When the HMNP for LTC program was launched, homes were required to have hired an NP in advance of submitting a funding request.
- Some homes have noted that it is challenging to finalize an employment contract with an NP without formal approval of funding.
- Therefore, beginning in 2023-24, homes have the option to submit a request after a candidate has been identified (e.g., an offer of employment has been prepared) but before a contract has been signed and/or the NP has started work.
 - i. If the funding request meets eligibility criteria and complies with the Funding Policy, the ministry will approve the request. However, funding will flow only after receiving confirmation that the NP has been hired.
 - ii. Homes will have four (4) weeks from the date of approval to provide confirmation that an employment contract is in place (i.e., an email to the ministry).
- Homes continue to have the option of applying for funds after the NP has been hired. In this circumstance, if the request meets eligibility criteria and complies with the Funding Policy, the ministry will approve the request and funding will flow according to the regular payment schedule.
- This funding methodology was chosen to give assurances to homes that funding has been approved, while also minimizing situations where homes apply for funding, but are unable to successfully recruit an NP, leading to vacant positions.
- The ministry will monitor uptake closely, in the context of available funding, and with a view to supporting fairness, and will notify LTC homes of any changes to the terms and conditions.

10. If only 75 NPs can be funded per year, is there a risk that the number of requests will exceed the amount of funding available? Could homes be turned down?

- The ministry does not anticipate any risk with the target of 75 NP FTEs per year.
- The ministry anticipates that many homes will request funding for less than a full 1.0 FTE, making the potential number of NPs hired greater than 75.
- Additional funding will become available on April 1, 2024, as the next fiscal year begins, for another 75 NP FTEs. The ministry will monitor uptake and flow funding for NP positions until approved funding nears exhaustion. If it looks as though funding may become fully allocated, the ministry will adjust or temporarily close the request process – with plenty of notice to homes – until the next fiscal year.

11. The ministry has only committed to funding up to 225 NPs until 2025, meaning the funding is only temporary. How can homes attract in-demand NPs when funding is not permanent?

- The ministry is investing \$57.6 million over three years, beginning in 2022-23, to recruit and retain up to 225 additional NPs in LTC.
- The ministry will look for longer-term opportunities for the program.

12. Will the Ministry allow homes to share an NP? Are homes able to share an NP with other sectors? Or to hire a part-time NP?

- The initiative allows LTC homes flexibility to meet their specific staffing needs.
- Homes are eligible to share NP FTE positions in certain circumstances, as long as all other requirements are met. In circumstances where an NP FTE(s) are shared, the Licensee that employs the NP is responsible for requesting funding and ensuring all partnering homes are in accordance with the *Hiring More Nurse Practitioners in Long-Term Care Funding Policy*.
- If a home shares an NP with an organization outside of LTC, this initiative would cover the employment expenses related to the work performed in the LTC home.
- LTC homes may hire part-time NPs to fill one FTE.
- Where recruiting a 1.0 FTE and/or sharing an NP is not feasible, a home may request funding to employ a part-time NP, with a total of less than 1.0 FTE, if other terms and conditions are adhered to.

13. Are homes able to hire NPs as independent contractors?

- LTC homes are able to request funding for NPs hired as independent contractors, so long as the NP has agreed to 12-months of service, and all other terms and conditions are met. This timeframe is intended to promote continuity of resident care, and support the NP as a leader in the home.
- Only homes that are the employer of the NP can request funding.

14. Are homes limited to the number of NPs they are able to hire? Is there an NP to resident ratio that homes are to follow? Is there a minimum bed count required?

- Nothing in the *Hiring More Nurse Practitioners in Long-Term Care Funding Policy* prevents a home from requesting funding for more than a 1.0 FTE.
- There is no minimum bed count or resident to NP ratio requirement as part of this initiative.
- Homes may request funding for more than 1.0 NP FTE under the initiative, so long as all other eligibility requirements are met.

15. If a home already has an NP funded through another funding source, such as the ANP initiative, can it request funding for an additional NP?

- Homes may employ an additional NP under the HMNPs if they have deemed an additional NP as necessary and all other requirements are met.

16. Can this funding only be used to support new positions/hires?

- This funding may be used for the creation of a new nurse practitioner full time equivalent (FTE) and/or for the conversion of an existing nurse practitioner position to a full-time position.

17. What happens if a home is approved for funding, and subsequently the NP leaves the position? Is the funding lost? Does the home need to reapply?

- There may be cases in which the circumstances of the funding request change in the middle of the funding period, as examples:
 - An NP leaves the position and/or a new NP is hired.
 - There is a change to the hours worked, percentage FTE, wage rate and/or benefit rate.
- In these cases, a new Funding Request Form must be submitted to the ministry verifying the new circumstances and the effective date of the change.
- If an NP leaves a position and is not replaced, the home must notify the ministry, and funding will cease. Any unspent funds will be returned to the ministry through the annual reconciliation process. Nothing would prevent this home from submitting a new request if a new NP is hired.

18. Is there a need to have Medical Director approval of the Funding Request?

- The *Hiring More Nurse Practitioners in Long-Term Care Funding Policy* does not require Medical Director approval of the NP employment. The funding request form does require authorization by a signing authority, such as a Director of Care.
- Homes should follow any existing internal processes and approvals for the hiring of new staff, including NPs.

Relocation Expenses

19. What is the ministry doing to support the unique needs of Northern, Rural homes that are especially challenged to recruit LTC staff, including NPs?

- The ministry recognizes that recruitment and retention of NPs is a challenge for all homes, and for homes in rural, northern, and remote communities those challenges are even greater.
- Through the HMNP for LTC initiative, LTC homes with a Rurality Index of Ontario (RIO) score of 40 or higher, may request a one-time reimbursement of relocation expenses for a newly hired NP, who has accepted a full-time position for a minimum of 12 months.

20. What are the eligibility requirements to be reimbursed for relocation expenses?

- Homes with a RIO of 40 or higher may request a maximum of \$5,000 in relocation expenses to cover:
 - i. Moving expenses (i.e transportation of belongings);
 - ii. Short-term accommodation expenses;
 - iii. Transportation and/or storage; and
 - iv. Other reasonable relocation expenses incurred by the NP, up to a maximum of \$1,000
- Communities with a RIO score of 40 or over often face long-standing, complex difficulties recruiting and retaining health care providers, such as NPs
- The OMA has a RIO score finder on the website listed on the slide, where you can enter a postal code to determine your score. Homes can find their RIO score here: <https://apps.oma.org/RIO/index>

Other Government Funding Streams

21. Are homes able to pull from other sources of funding to supplement salaries? It is difficult to attract and retain NPs without higher compensation in the current market.

- The ministry is aware that homes compensate NPs at different levels.
- A home may, at its discretion, adjust NP compensation over and above the \$123,340 in salary and benefits provided by the program using level-of-care (LOC) funds in compliance with the *Hiring More Nurse Practitioners in Long-Term Care Funding Policy*.
- Homes are able to use Allied Health Professionals Staffing Supplement Funding to supplement NP salary, benefits, and overhead, as long as expenditures comply with the *Long-Term Care Staffing Supply Increase Funding Policy*.

22. How is the program different than the Attending Nurse Practitioner Initiative?

- The Attending Nurse Practitioner Initiative in LTC (ANP Initiative) was launched in 2015 and delivered by the Ontario Health Regions. The third and final phase of the initiative launched in 2021, and it is fully subscribed.
- The HMNP for LTC initiative is new funding to recruit and retain up to 225 additional nurse practitioners (NPs) in the sector. It does not replace the ANP program.
- While the HMNP for LTC initiative is aligned with the ANP initiative in many ways, there are some key differences. As an example, the ANP program recommended a specific breakdown of the NPs role for clinical, leadership and research tasks. The HMNP for LTC initiative does not speak to the job description of the NP, and leaves this for the NP and the home to establish together.
- The request-based funding approach is another key difference from the ANP initiative, which approved specific homes for a funded position, in advance of the recruitment process. The HMNP for LTC allows homes in a position to hire an NP to access funds as quickly as possible.

23. There is a notable increase to the maximum funds provided for salary and benefits under the HMNP for LTC initiative compared to the ANP initiative Will the ANP initiative increase in maximum salary and benefits as well?

- The HMNP for LTC initiative is new dedicated funding for additional NPs; it does not replace the ANP program.
- The ministry will review the ANP initiative.

24. How does this initiative impact Nurse-Led Outreach Teams?

- The HMNP for LTC initiative is not a replacement for other ministry or government initiatives and does not impact the terms of other initiatives.
- Homes are responsible for ensuring they are in adherence to all applicable terms and conditions for any and all sources of government funding.

Funding Request Form

25. What is meant by having a candidate formally identified?

- Some homes have noted that it is challenging to finalize an employment contract with an NP without formal approval of funding.
- Therefore, homes have the option to submit a request after a candidate has been identified but before a contract has been signed and/or the NP has started work.
- Having an identified candidate may look like, for example, having an offer of employment prepared and/or completing the formal recruitment process.

26. How should homes demonstrate that an offer has been accepted and/or an employment contract has been signed?

- An email to the ministry, referencing the original funding request, may be used to confirm that an employment contract is in place.
- LTC homes are expected to maintain records related to the NP FTE and that demonstrate that eligibility criteria have been met.

27. What if the candidate we have identified does not accept the offer?

- If the candidate does not accept the offer within 4 weeks of the funding request being approved by the ministry, the LTC home will be unable to receive funding. The request will be considered expired.
- If the candidate accepts the offer after 4 weeks, or another candidate is identified, the home may submit a new request to the ministry.

28. What should homes put in the Expense Information section of the Funding Request Form? Is it the annual salary of the NP, or the amount required for the fiscal year, or the total across all funding years?

- As described in Section 4, employment expenses should identify the annual (12-month) salary, benefits and overhead expenses required to employ the NP.
- The form includes columns for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 funding year. By default, approved funding will continue into the next fiscal year, for the remainder of the three-year funding period, however if a different amount is requested for Year 2, homes may specify that in this section. If employment circumstances change, the home may submit a replacement Funding Request Form so the ministry can review and update the allocation, if necessary.
- The ministry can only approve requests for expenses up to the maximum amount stated in the Hiring More Nurse Practitioners for Long-Term Care Funding Policy (\$123,340 for salary and benefits and \$8,513 in overhead per NP FTE, per year).
 - Requests that exceed this amount but are otherwise eligible will be approved for the maximum amount, prorated for the percentage FTE and the request period.

Nurse Practitioner Supply in Ontario

29. There is an extreme shortage of health care staff in Ontario. Even if homes want to hire more nurse practitioners, is there available supply? What is the government doing to address supply challenges?

- The government provides annual funding to the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner (PHCNP) program (an advanced nursing education program) to support up to 200 seats in the PHCNP across nine Ontario universities.
- For 2022-23, the Ministry of Long-Term Care is funding the enrollment of 38 additional students into the program, which started in September 2022.
- The government is continuing to look for opportunities to expand education and training opportunities for Nurse Practitioners.