



# Governor’s Best Practices in Workforce & Economic Development Award Nomination Application

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**Nominated Project Title:** Internationally Educated Nurses Transition Program

**Project Lead Name:** Pat Brown **Phone number** 253.566.5147 **E-mail** pbrown@tacomacc.edu

**Summary of nominated project** (No more than two sentences.): Developed and piloted a curriculum to assist nurses educated in other countries with the transition to American healthcare and nursing. Project included provision of resources and practice equipment to participants, as well as licensing exam preparation, language understandability training, and job coaching.

**Region and/or communities benefitting from project:** Pierce and King Counties

**When (month and year) did nominated project launch:** July 2010.

**Has the project/activity operated continuously since then:** Yes

**If not, explain:**Ready to repeat, have waitlist of eligible participants. Awaiting next funding source.

**Start-up costs** \$199,678 **Most recent annual budget:** \$161,506 (projected for next program offering.)

**List your major funding sources, including tax credits or incentives, grants, and other private sector support:** Partnership Training Grant through Workforce Central of Pierce County and Promise of Nursing for Washington Nursing School Grant, through the Washington Center for Nursing.

**Describe the purpose (need) and the unique approach taken by the nominated project to satisfy the stated need (450 words or less)**

**Issue and Background:** Nurses who are US residents and were educated and practiced in another country face significant obstacles in obtaining licensure and employment in the US:

- Educational credentials verification
- Supplementation in education based on knowledge or skill gaps
- Unique differentiation in the US health system and nursing role
- Need to refresh because of time out of practice
- Language and understandability challenges

2008 data show that nationally only 45% of internationally educated nurses (IENs) passed the licensing exam on first attempt, and only another 25% in repeat attempts. A significant number of IENs reside in Pierce and King Counties. Unable to obtain US nursing credentials, IENs are severely underemployed, sometimes in low-skill health jobs, but often in non-health low-wage industries, or unemployed. Their education and experience are underutilized and they and their families economically disadvantaged.

Washington State’s diversity is increasing in all geographic areas, yet our nursing population does not yet mirror that diversity. Puget Sound area IENs come from many different countries and reflect a rich diversity of ethnicity and perspectives, mirroring those populations receiving health care in our region. Other states have demonstrated the ability to identify IEN’s and assist them in transitioning into an RN role. Creating programs for IENs addresses the nursing shortage, lack of diversity, and underemployment of these individuals in our state.

A ten-month pilot program for IENs was developed and implemented between August 2010 and June 2011, funding provided as above. A cohort of eighteen nurses from eight countries were provided instruction in:

Unique American healthcare and nursing role features.

Technical and professional updates.

Obstetrical nursing and psychiatric nursing.

Computer Simulated Patient care experience.

English language proficiency.

Medical Terminology.

Pharmacology and math review.

NCLEX preparation.

American Accent and Dialect Coaching.

In addition to instruction, participants were provided support for credentialing evaluation (required for licensure) through Welcome Back Center, Highline Community College, textbooks, supplies, licensing applications, practice exams for language testing and nursing licensure, and job coaching.

Unique features of the project:

- a. One of only approximately ten known to exist in the country.
- b. Partnership with Welcome Back Center, Highline CC for specialized expertise with international workforce.
- c. Total wraparound services for participants. For example, through partnership with Workforce Central of Pierce County, participants were provided assistance with child care, health coverage and other life issues. (see next section)
- d. TCC's robust human patient simulator lab allowed for real-life patient care experiences, as current regulatory restrictions prohibit participation at clinical sites pre-licensure.
- e. Individual coaching by a diction specialist to assist IENs in mastering the American accent, critical to understandability in the healthcare setting and in job success.

**Describe how the nominated project incorporates both workforce and economic development practices and provides a benefit to workers and employers. (See cover page) (250 words or less)**

The national shortage of Registered Nurses is well documented. Internationally Educated Nurses are underemployed or unemployed. Preparing them for licensure and employment, without overstraining the existing educational resources for generic RN education, provides the health care sector a richly diverse supplemental pool for their RN staff. Economic status of the nurses is exponentially increased compared to their pre-RN licensure wage earning capacity. WorkForce Central Career Coaches met with participants weekly, and continue the relationship as they prepare for NCLEX and RN employment. They work with each student to help troubleshoot, and provide supportive services tailored to meet the needs of each student, ranging from rent and grocery assistance to in-depth resume and job search preparation.

**Will the nominated project continue into the future? Yes**

**If yes, how will it be funded and sustained. (200 words)** With college budget reductions, continuation must at this time be contingent upon outside funding sources. Opportunity has not yet been identified.

**In an attachment, demonstrate how this project/activity has made a quantifiable difference to the economic health of working people and employers. (Tables and graphs based on verifiable numbers. Words should be used only to support the data and should be kept to a minimum)**

**Check when done.**

**A short concluding statement on why you believe this project/activity is noteworthy or unique and should serve as a best practice model. (100 words or less)** The partnership between education and workforce was truly extraordinary and creative in terms of reaching into all sectors for support and assistance. However, even more significant was opening the door to a segment of our silent and under-recognized potential workforce: healthcare workers who were highly educated in their home country and live in Washington States unable to practice their professions.

**Program or Project's website or webpage:** n/a

**List the leading individual(s) or organization(s) that should receive special recognition for their role in the project or activity. Please provide name, title, role, address and phone number.**

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## Economic Projection for Registered Nurses in Washington State

400: new RNs needed per year in Washington State<sup>1</sup>

90: Identified Internationally Educated Nursing Pool, Pierce and King  
Counties<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Current Status of Washington Nursing Workforce, 2010 Report, Washington Center for Nursing,  
<http://www.wacenterfornursing.org/data-reports/reports-archive.php?year=2010>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Tacoma Community College and Welcome Back Center, Highline Community College

June 14, 2011 speech by Isaac Kamau, student

## International Educated Nurses

Salutes (of various dignitaries in order of the hierarchy of command in relation to those who are present in the ceremony)

It is with great honor that I stand to represent my beloved colleague in this big occasion to mark the end of a wonderful IEN program which is also the first of its kind in the history of TCC. Indeed it's a milestone for both the Program managers and the students' graduates. It has been only Nine months yet it appears as if it was just yesterday. The program was not only interesting but very beneficial.

Kindly allow me to mention some of the key achievement that has characterized this program;

First the program has been able to recall IEN from their dormant zone. Majority of us could have never made to achieve the level we are now without such a program. Many of my colleagues are working in an underutilized facility where they feel that their potential is being wasted. However this program has send lights at the end of the tunnel. The hope is now great to achieve our dream.

The second important aspect that characterizes this program is Funding. It has not been easy to get our transcripts from our mother country and particularly from the institutions where we underwent the nursing studies. However the process has been made incredibly easy through the continuous support and guidance of program facilitators. It is a process that could have not been made possible without financial aid.

Worthy mentioning is the academic program that was well design to meet the various needs of IEN who are attempting to take NCLEX–RN. Various aspects of nursing were reviewed in attempt to prepare us not only for NCLEX but also in equipping us to be a safe and effective nurse in US. The NCLEX-RN preparation has been done so thorough and we have been given wide data base of resources to prepare us for the national exams. We appreciate the wonderful work done by various Tutors. In deed as I have always stated a teacher affects eternity and it is impossible to tell where their influence ends.

Understanding American healthcare system appeared like a nightmare. It seemed complex and rigid. Indeed it required a formal method to understand it. This program has provided an avenue not only to understand the system but also to enjoy working under it.

For some of us the program is just a platform for further studies; both BSN and Master’s Program. The sky is the limit.

In nursing networking is key. This program have provided a chance to all of us to meet various individual who are of great help in pursuing clinical placement and job opportunities. It was also wonderful to learn that my fellow colleagues have varied experiences and skills in different aspect in nursing based on the departments they worked in their country of origin.

### Challenges

The wonderful program has not been without challenges;\_As student from different countries all over the world, it has been difficult to adopt the American communication system

To balance between Work, School and Family needs amidst greater expectations from each of them.

Toefl as a requirement against NCLEX (which is our main goal.)