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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

‘Planning a National Nursing Quality and Safety Alliance’ The Nurse-Patient Quality Alliance (NPQA) Pathway

Background

Under a year-long planning grant housed at The George Washington University (GW) and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), leaders of the nation’s professional nursing organizations have been contemplating the establishment of an alliance dedicated to patient safety and health care quality referred to as the Nursing Quality and Safety Alliance (NQSA). Substantial progress has been achieved (see detailed meeting and conference call summaries) including recent discussions that shift the focus of this alliance from a nurse-only to a nurse-patient collaborative (see *The Promise of Patient Partnerships*, Item D).

Although a decision about this direction has not been made, in order to accelerate next steps, this paper assumes support for the nurse-patient model and describes its organizational underpinnings and primary aims. Specifically, this paper defines the quality enterprise, proposes an array of strategies for achieving transformation of nursing care, proposes a mission statement for the Alliance that supports this transformation, and articulates a set of complementary roles/functions to build the quality strategy over the next 1 to 3 years.

The Quality Enterprise

In 1999, the Strategic Framework Board (SFB) envisioned a national quality measurement and reporting system, now referred to as the ‘quality enterprise.’¹ This enterprise has been defined as the building blocks that enable the delivery and improvement of evidence-based care:

- National quality improvement goals and priorities;
- Standard and consensually developed performance measures that enable evaluation of progress against the goals and priorities;
- Public reporting of health care performance to motivate improvements, hold providers accountable, and drive consumer and purchaser selection;
- Translational evidence-based practice to stimulate rapid improvement;
- Education and workforce preparation²;
- Value-based purchasing programs that align payment with performance and incentivize stakeholders to achieve higher levels of value.

¹ The Strategic Framework Board’s Design for a National Quality Measurement and Reporting System. *Med Care*. 2003;41(1) Supplement:I-87-I-89, January 2003.

² Although not explicit about workforce preparation as an essential building block, the SFB did recognize the human capital investments required to establish a culture of continuous quality improvement. The nursing convener organizations consider workforce preparation a vital building block as reflected in this amended list.

Currently, in the absence of sufficient funds to support this enterprise, a number of private organizations and government agencies have assumed these roles (attachment 1). For example, in recent months, the National Priorities Partnership (NPP), a group of 28 leading health care, consumer, employer, and public and private payer groups dedicated to transforming health care by establishing and monitoring performance goals, released a set of national priorities and goals.³ Measure developers including federal agencies (e.g., CMS, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]), accreditation organizations (e.g., The Joint Commission, National Committee on Quality Assurance), and professional societies (e.g., American Nurses Association, American College of Cardiology, American Medical Association-Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement®) have made substantial investments in developing measures that have been considered for endorsement by NQF. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) has championed a number of national campaigns to improve care and reduce medical errors. While together these efforts are not inconsequential, they are fragmented, uncoordinated, and misaligned, and they only marginally address the contributions, needs, knowledge, and expertise of nurses.

While it can be argued that the current quality enterprise is disorganized and chaotic, its primary aims are indisputable:

What is the primary aim of the health care quality enterprise?

The primary aim of the health care quality enterprise is the provision of care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, equitable, and efficient.

A Shared Mission

Assuming that the vision has shifted from a nurse-only to a nurse-patient quality alliance, it is necessary to revisit the proposed mission statement. (NOTE: Table 1 provides a side-by-side of the original mission, purpose, and priority statements proposed as compared to these revisions.)

Furthermore, during its February conference call, the Convener representatives made several suggestions regarding the mission. Specifically, that the mission statement should:

- be concise;
- include nurses at all levels of practice (e.g., advanced practice);
- be aspirational;
- reflect an ongoing process rather than a final destination;
- be measureable;
- be transparent;
- highlight collaboration both internally (e.g., among nursing’s diverse constituencies) and externally (e.g., with stakeholders);

³ National Priorities Partnership. National Priorities and Goals. November 2008. Available at <http://www.nationalprioritiespartnership.org/Home.aspx>. Last accessed January 27, 2009.

- emphasize patient-centeredness (although agreement was not reached about the terminology – i.e., patient-centered versus person-centered versus consumer-centered);
- distinguish it as an effort unique to nursing versus other improvement efforts undertaken by various non-nursing groups;
- incorporate the term and value of leadership; and
- differentiate itself as a nursing-oriented alliance.

Taking into consideration the new direction of the Alliance and the specific feedback about its focus, the following revised mission statement is proposed for consideration:

What is our shared mission with these partners and collaborators?

The mission of the Nurse-Patient Quality Alliance* (NPQA) is to advance person-centered, high value nursing care through partnership, innovation, and leadership.

** The term Nurse-Patient Quality Alliance is being used to refer to this collaboration although, at this time, is not intended to be a formal name/title.*

What is Our Purpose? The Path of Promise

The establishment of NPQA is based on the assumption that the relationship between patients and nurses is intimate, unique, and critical to achieving improved health and well-being. Therefore, as a national fulcrum for nurse-led quality improvement, a nurse-patient quality alliance will serve the following three proposed purposes:

- Inspire continued trust and confidence in the nursing profession among patients, their families, and the American public;
- Leverage nurses, the single largest health care workforce, together with patients, partners in their care, in accelerating performance improvement;
- Stimulate reform through shared perspectives, knowledge, and values among nurses and patients, their families, and consumer stakeholders.

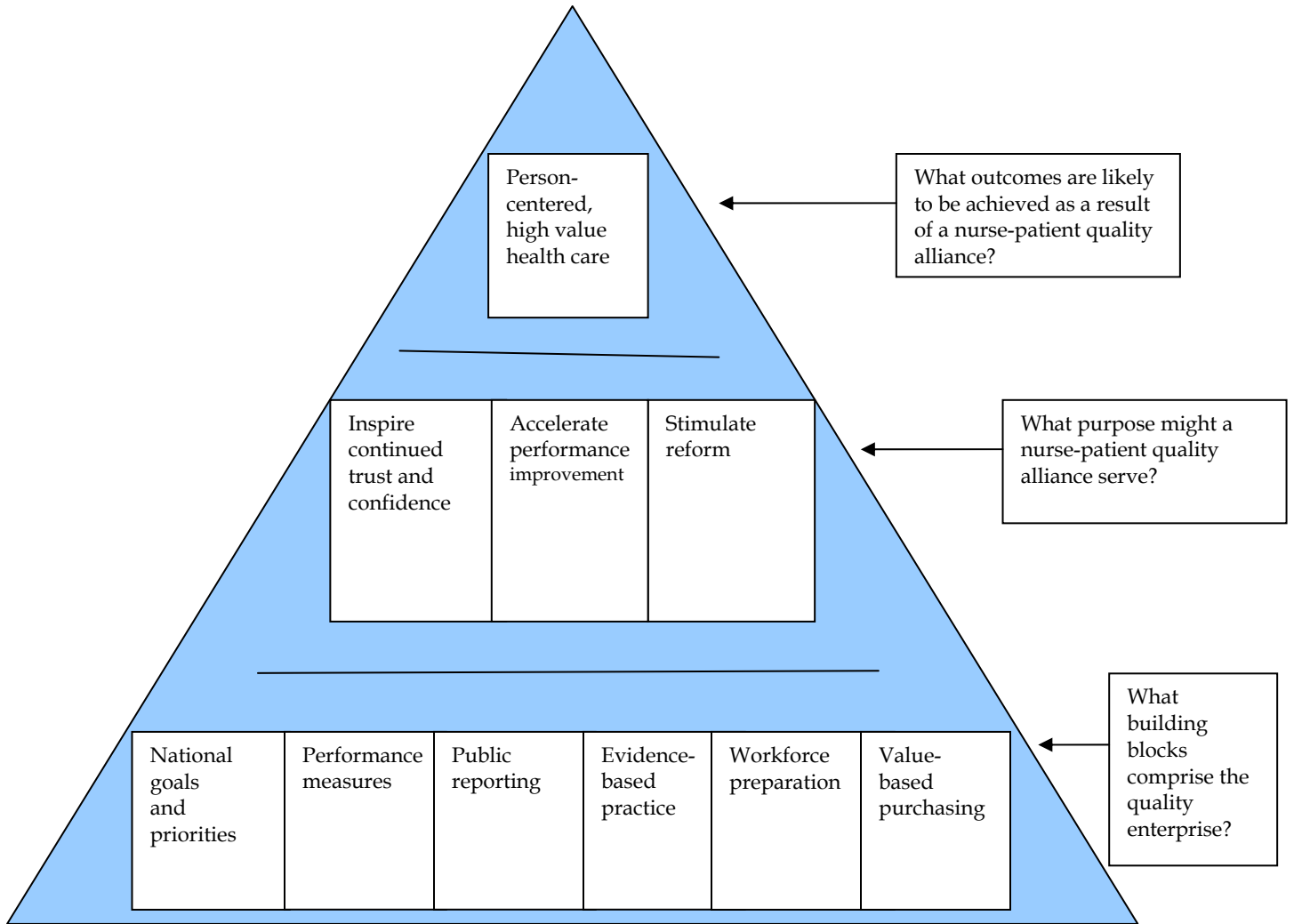
Conceptual Framework

Based on the proposed mission and purpose statements, the conceptual framework on which NPQA will be built is organized at three levels:

1. The building blocks of the quality enterprise as the foundation;
2. The purpose of NPQA as its centerpiece; and
3. The outcomes that are likely to be achieved as a result of the NPQA as the highest level – the aspiration.

Diagram 1 illustrates these framework elements and their relationship.

NQSA Mission: The mission of NPQA is to advance person-centered, high value nursing care through partnership, innovation, and leadership.



Key Priorities

This paper proposes three central purposes assumed by NPQA. Background on each area is briefly reviewed in the following sections with complementary priorities.

1. Inspire continued trust and confidence in the nursing profession

This purpose addresses the need to fulfill nurses' resolve to be an advocate for patients, which holds awesome responsibility. To productively assume this role, national nursing organizations must commit to understanding and honoring patient preferences, embrace patient diversity cultures, values, and ideas, and place patients' interests above their own. As patient stewards, the nursing profession must demonstrate its trustworthiness to the American public.

Succeeding in this purpose is contingent on a sincere and authentic understanding of patients and their needs as well as a deep understanding, by patients, of the work of nurses. To accomplish this mutual understanding, the following priorities should be undertaken:

- synthesize what is known about nurse-patient relationships and their importance in achieving care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable;
- articulate nurses' contributions to national quality improvement goals and priorities such as those promulgated by the National Priorities Partners (NPP)⁴;
- strengthen the visibility of nursing in performance measurement and public reporting activities;
- establish an agenda for measure development by identifying performance measures that would be high value to patients and capture nurses' contributions to the national goals and priorities;
- test measures that are developed for their sufficiency;
- advocate and support the endorsement by a national consensus standards setting organization, such as NQF, of nursing-sensitive measures; and
- disseminate and communicate nursing's contribution to quality to consumer, purchaser, and policymaker audiences through such vehicles as nursing care quality performance reports, public information campaigns, and policy white papers.

Specific examples of work activities that support these priorities can be found in table 2.

2. Accelerate Performance Improvement

This purpose addresses the need for nurses to be accountable, at least in part, for the variation, low performance, and suboptimal health care that exist and to respond with rapid, sustained, and measurable improvements in the care they deliver. While ambitious, this purpose attempts to drive significant improvements in nursing care performance, in partnership with patients, by

⁴ National Priorities Partnership (NPP). *National Priorities and Goals: Aligning Our Efforts to Transform America's Healthcare*. Washington, DC:NPP, November 2008. Available at <http://www.nationalprioritiespartnership.org/uploadedFiles/NPP/08-253-NQF%20ReportLo%5B6%5D.pdf>; last accessed March 15, 2009.

translating evidence-based practice at the point of care. Specific priorities that respond to this purpose include the following:

- identify areas of low-level performance, significant variation, or suboptimal care for which nurses are accountable and which are viewed by patients as high impact;
- launch national quality improvement campaigns that unite evidence with clinical practice and that engage nurses and patients as equal partners in quality improvement transformation;
- leverage existing nursing research and support the translation of scientific findings into bedside practice;
- identify and disseminate nursing-led best practice guidelines to achieve widespread improvements in care.

Specific examples of work activities that support these priorities can be found in table 2.

3. Stimulate Reform

This purpose addresses the need for federal policy setting related to quality and safety to avail itself of patients and nurses. Under this purpose, NPQA would inform and respond to the quality/safety policy debate (passive and reactive) as well as press for policy reform to reflect patients and nurses' needs and contributions (proactive).

Within this purpose, specific priorities include the following:

- respond to policymakers' requests for data, information, and exemplars;
- identify a strategic policy roadmap that addresses those issues that affect both patients and nurses (e.g., public reporting of staffing levels) and proactively advocate with policy makers for this agenda;
- serve as a resource to federal departments including the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, and their reporting agencies (e.g., CMS, AHRQ, Health Resources and Services Administration, Veterans Health Administration) on accountability and transparency policy directions;
- advocate for the adoption of specific policies that support evidence-based, nursing-led practice among policymakers, lawmakers, and purchasers;
- identify nurse- and patient-experts and build capacity to serve in leadership roles (e.g., committees, advisory boards); and
- write and deliver testimony, public comments, policy white papers, and other opinion pieces (e.g., editorials) on related issues.

Specific examples of work activities that support these priorities can be found in table 2.

Next Steps

This paper describes the quality enterprise and how, in the context of this enterprise, a community established among nurses and consumers, patients, and their families might be transformative. The community is referred to as the 'Nurse-Patient Quality Alliance' and these priorities viewed as a set of complementary efforts to inspire continued trust and confidence among the public in the nursing profession, leverage a partnership between nurses and patients to accelerate performance improvement, and stimulate reform.

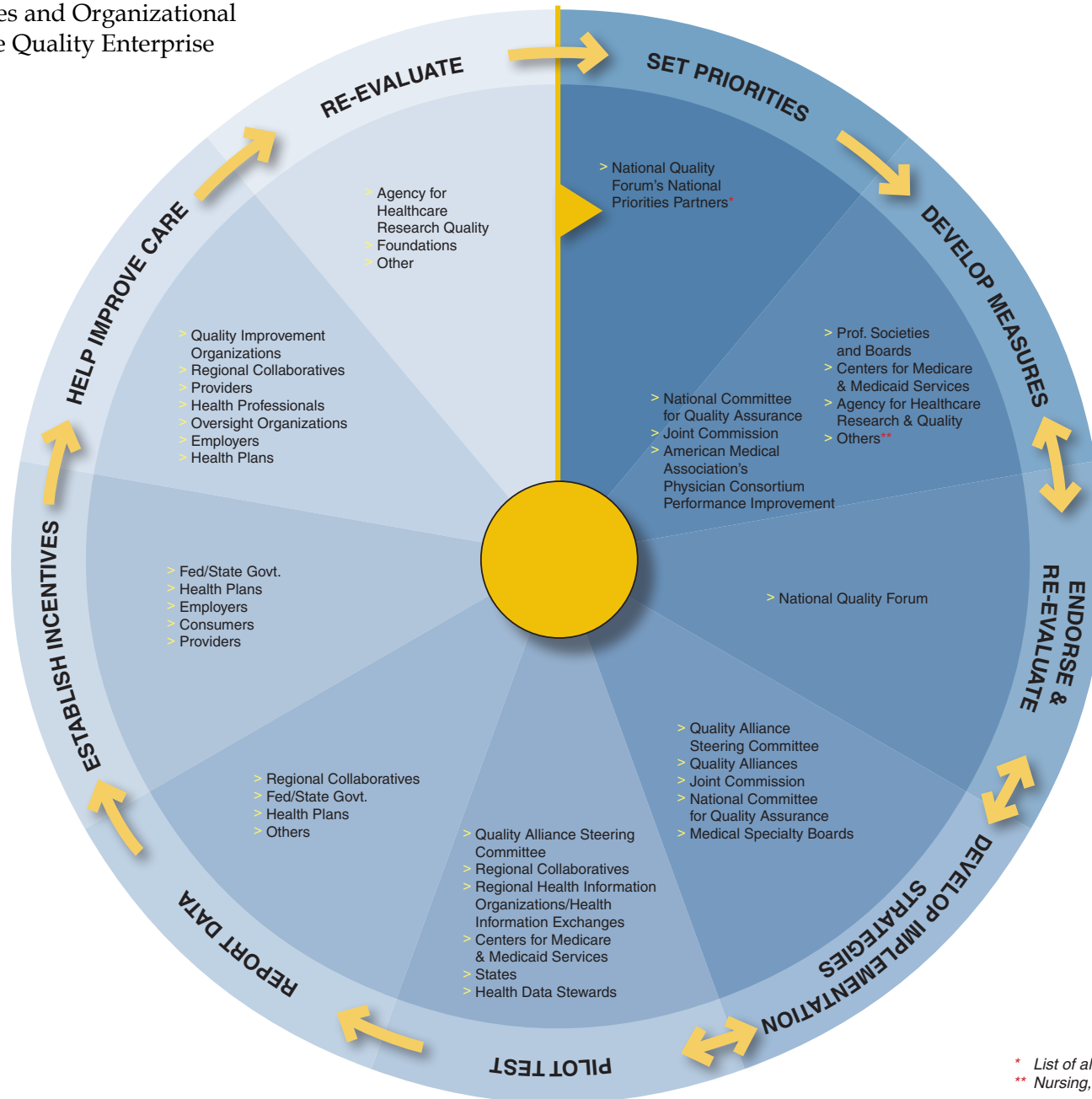
These proposed priorities, the mission on which they are based and the companion activities envisioned, should be viewed as a possible course of action rather than a formal set of recommendations. In this deliberation, the group should contemplate these key questions:

1. What general reactions does the group have to the revised mission and purpose statements and priorities?
2. What specific suggestions might be made to strengthen these statements and directions?
3. What further revisions are necessary to obtain support from the group in moving forward?

Following its deliberation and reconciliation of these issues, project staff will begin to design operational and governing structures and specify necessary resources to pursue this vision.

Steps for Improving Health Care Quality & Value: Who's Making it Happen?

Attachment 1: Roles and Organizational Involvement in the Quality Enterprise



* List of all involved partners available.
 ** Nursing, Academic Communities, etc.

Table 1: Comparison of Initially Proposed and Revised Mission, Purpose, and Priority Statements

	Revised	Initially Proposed
Mission Statement	The mission of the Nurse-Patient Quality Alliance (NPQA) is to advance person-centered, high value nursing care through partnership, innovation, and leadership.	The mission of NQSA is to achieve high quality and safe patient-centered care by contributing nursing knowledge, expertise, and discovery to the quality enterprise.
Purpose Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire continued trust and confidence in the nursing profession among patients, their families, and the American public; • Leverage nurses, the single largest health care workforce, together with patients, partners in their care, in accelerating performance improvement; and • Stimulate reform through shared perspectives, knowledge, and values among nurses and patients, their families, and consumer stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire continued trust and confidence among the public in the nursing profession; • Leverage the single largest health care workforce in accelerating performance improvement and the national policies that underpin quality; and • Drive policies that accelerate nursing-directed improvements in quality and safety.
Priority #1	<p>Inspire continued trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synthesize what is known about nurse-patient relationships and their importance in achieving care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable; • articulate nurses’ contributions to national quality improvement goals and priorities such as those promulgated by the National Priorities Partners (NPP)⁵; • strengthen the visibility of nursing in performance measurement and public reporting activities; • establish an agenda for measure development by identifying performance measures that would be high value to patients and capture nurses’ contributions to the national goals and priorities; 	<p>Inspire continued trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulate nurses’ contributions to national quality improvement goals and priorities; • establish an agenda for measure development by identifying nursing-specific measure development priorities that address these goals and priorities; • collaborate with measure developers to review, test, and finalize performance measures; • advocate and support the endorsement by a national consensus standards setting organization, such as NQF, of nursing-sensitive measures; and • disseminate and communicate nursing’s contribution to quality to consumer, purchaser, and policymaker audiences through such vehicles as nursing care quality

⁵ National Priorities Partnership (NPP). *National Priorities and Goals: Aligning Our Efforts to Transform America’s Healthcare*. Washington, DC:NPP, November 2008. Available at <http://www.nationalprioritiespartnership.org/uploadedFiles/NPP/08-253-NQF%20ReportLo%5B6%5D.pdf>; last accessed March 15, 2009.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test measures that are developed for their sufficiency; • advocate and support the endorsement by a national consensus standards setting organization, such as NQF, of nursing-sensitive measures; and • disseminate and communicate nursing’s contribution to quality to consumer, purchaser, and policymaker audiences through such vehicles as nursing care quality performance reports, public information campaigns, and policy white papers. 	performance reports, public information campaigns, and policy white papers.
Priority #2	<p>Accelerate performance improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify areas of low-level performance, significant variation, or suboptimal care for which nurses are accountable and which are viewed by patients as high impact; • launch national quality improvement campaigns that unite evidence with clinical practice and that engage nurses and patients as equal partners in quality improvement transformation; • leverage existing nursing research and support the translation of scientific findings into bedside practice; • identify and disseminate nursing-led best practice guidelines to achieve widespread improvements 	<p>Accelerate performance improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leverage existing nursing research and support the translation of scientific findings into bedside practice; • identify and disseminate nursing-led best practice guidelines to achieve improvements in care; • launch and/or collaborate on national quality improvement campaigns that unite evidence with clinical practice and that engage nurses in quality improvement transformation; and • accelerate the improvement of nursing care quality through the translation of nursing-led evidence-based practice at the point of care.
Priority #3	<p>Stimulate reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to policymakers’ requests for data, information, and exemplars; • identify a strategic policy roadmap that addresses those issues that affect both patients and nurses (e.g., public reporting of staffing levels) and proactively advocate with policy makers for this agenda; • serve as a resource to federal departments including the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of 	<p>Drive policies that accelerate nursing-directed improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to policymakers’ requests for data, information, and exemplars; • identify a strategic policy roadmap for nursing quality and proactively advocate with policy makers for this agenda; • serve as a resource to federal departments including the Department of Health and Human Services,

	<p>Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, and their reporting agencies (e.g., CMS, AHRQ, Health Resources and Services Administration, Veterans Health Administration) on accountability and transparency policy directions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocate for the adoption of specific policies that support evidence-based, nursing-led practice among policymakers, lawmakers, and purchasers; • identify nurse- and patient-experts and build capacity to serve in leadership roles (e.g., committees, advisory boards); and • write and deliver testimony, public comments, policy white papers, and other opinion pieces (e.g., editorials) on related issues. 	<p>Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, and their reporting agencies (e.g., CMS, AHRQ, Health Resources and Services Administration, Veterans Health Administration) on accountability and transparency policy directions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocate for the adoption of specific policies that support evidence-based, nursing-led practice among policymakers, lawmakers, and purchasers; • formulate evidence, position papers, and consensus statements related to transparency and accountability agendas including, but not limited to, nurses interface with high value health care (e.g., value-based purchasing); • identify nursing experts and build capacity to serve in leadership roles (e.g., committees, advisory boards); and • write and deliver testimony, public comments, and policy white papers on related issues.
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Table 2: Specific Examples of Work Activities

Proposed Purpose	Proposed Priorities	Work Activities/Examples
<p>1. Inspire continued trust and confidence in the nursing profession among patients, their families, and the American public</p>	<p>a. synthesize what is known about nurse-patient relationships and their importance in achieving care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable</p> <p>b. articulate nurses’ contributions to national quality improvement goals and priorities such as those promulgated by the National Priorities Partners (NPP)</p> <p>c. strengthen the visibility of nursing in performance measurement and public reporting activities</p> <p>d. establish an agenda for measure development by identifying performance measures that would be high value and capture nurses’ contributions to the national goals and priorities</p> <p>e. test measures that are developed for their sufficiency</p> <p>f. advocate and support the endorsement by a national</p>	<p>1) Articulate nurses’ contributions to the Priority Partnership’s Goals/Priorities. Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPP Priority: Safety • NPP Goal: All healthcare organizations and their staff will strive to ensure a culture of safety while driving to lower the incidence of healthcare-induced harm, disability, or death toward zero. They will focus relentlessly on continually reducing and seeking to eliminate all healthcare-associated infections and serious adverse events. • Nursing-specific Goal: By 20XX, nurse-led evidence-based models, which have effectively reduced falls with injuries should be widely adopted among X% of the nation’s hospitals,, nursing homes, home health agencies, and outpatient settings. A target of X% overall reduction in falls with injuries by 20XX has been established for this purpose. <p>2) Inventory of existing measures and compare to the nursing-specific goals would be undertaken – a gap analysis would reveal measure development opportunities</p> <p>3) Existing nursing quality databases (e.g., NDNQI, CaNOC, VANOD) would assume responsibility for measure development, testing, maintenance</p>

Proposed Purpose	Proposed Priorities	Work Activities/Examples
	<p>consensus standards setting organization, such as NQF, of nursing-sensitive measures</p> <p>g. disseminate and communicate nursing's contribution to quality to consumer, purchaser, and policymaker audiences through such vehicles as nursing care quality performance reports, public information campaigns, and policy white papers</p>	
<p>2. Leverage nurses, the single largest health care workforce, together with patients, partners in their care, in accelerating performance improvement</p>	<p>a. identify areas of low-level performance, significant variation, or suboptimal care for which nurses are accountable and which are viewed by patients as high impact</p> <p>b. launch national quality improvement campaigns that unite evidence with clinical practice and that engage nurses and patients as equal partners in quality improvement transformation</p> <p>c. leverage existing nursing research and support the translation of scientific</p>	<p>1) Based on the nursing-specific goal (see above), NPQA would identify areas interest and launch a national campaign to improve performance in one - or more - areas (e.g., falls with injuries)</p> <p>2) Evidence-based strategies to reduce falls with injuries would be identified and shared with the nursing community; resources would be devoted to stimulating improvement and monitoring progress</p> <p>3) Activities intended to transform the nursing workforce and promote a culture of safety would be undertaken to promote prevention, surveillance, error reporting, and performance improvement</p>

Proposed Purpose	Proposed Priorities	Work Activities/Examples
	<p>findings into bedside practice</p> <p>d. identify and disseminate nursing-led best practice guidelines to achieve widespread improvements in care</p>	
<p>3. Stimulate reform through shared perspectives, knowledge, and values among nurses and patients, their families, and consumer stakeholders</p>	<p>a. respond to policymakers' requests for data, information, and exemplars</p> <p>b. identify a strategic policy roadmap that addresses those issues that affect both patients and nurses (e.g., public reporting of staffing levels) and proactively advocate with policy makers for this agenda</p> <p>c. serve as a resource to federal departments including the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, and their reporting agencies (e.g., CMS, AHRQ, Health Resources and Services Administration, Veterans Health Administration) on accountability and</p>	<p>1) Based on the rulemaking schedule, respond to inpatient, outpatient, home health, and nursing home regulations</p> <p>2) Respond via public comments to consensus standards proposed by the NQF</p> <p>3) Nominate consensus candidates for roles on national advisory committees, boards, advisory groups, etc.</p> <p>4) Advocate for nursing as a separate cost center on the inpatient hospital bill</p> <p>5) Identify and strengthen opportunities to translate nursing practice and research into policy</p>

Proposed Purpose	Proposed Priorities	Work Activities/Examples
	<p>transparency policy directions</p> <p>d. advocate for the adoption of specific policies that support evidence-based, nursing-led practice among policymakers, lawmakers, and purchasers</p> <p>e. identify nurse- and patient-experts and build capacity to serve in leadership roles (e.g., committees, advisory boards)</p> <p>f. write and deliver testimony, public comments, and policy white papers on related issues</p>	