

Employers Adding a New/Emerging Competency to RN/NP Scope of Practice¹- Practice Support

As knowledge and technology advance and health care environments change, nursing practice continually evolves. Increasingly, RNs/NPs face decisions about performing procedures, competencies, or activities that are new, or were previously the responsibility of other health care professionals. There may be circumstances within the health care system, employment setting, or in a specific practice setting where new and/or emerging competencies are required to be added to the scope of RNs or NPs.

CRNNL Decision-Making Framework

Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and Employers/Organizations are granted authority, by the College, to incorporate new and/or emerging competencies into the scope of practice of RNs/NPs within their employment setting, provided key principles are met. The College has developed a Decision-Making Framework that can be used to inform the employer's process for advancing nursing scope of practice. The College's decision-making framework incorporates a principle-based approach to stimulate critical evaluation of proposed scope of practice changes.

The College's Decision-Making Framework is underpinned by the following assumptions:

- The College is responsible to set the parameters for scope of practice decision making to promote safe, competent, and ethical nursing practice.
- The **Registered Nurses Act, 2008** and **Registered Nurses Regulations** identifies requirements for authorization of RN/NP Practice.
- RNs/NPs hold professional accountability for their own practice.
- The RHA/employer is responsible to provide quality health care services in response to client needs.
- The RHA/employer has available resources and internal quality initiatives to facilitate advancing nursing scope of practice.

The Decision-Making Framework is designed to ensure public safety and competent nursing practice by requiring input be sought from all relevant professionals, contextual issues to be thoroughly explored, and the necessary safeguards, including nursing education and policy, to be established. To promote consistency, RHAs are encouraged to use this information as a template to develop their own process.

Further, RHAs/employers are strongly encouraged to develop or adopt a standard review process for their organization that reflects adherence to the College's foundational principles to ensure a consistent, comprehensive, and professional review of all scope of nursing practice requests. This includes the identification of the employer's authority and procedures whereby scope of practice requests are submitted, reviewed, and approved. The RHA/employer process should be established before any new decisions about performance of new or emerging nursing competencies are reviewed. The established process should be supported through nursing policy and readily available within all applicable practice settings.

¹ For further information on scope of practice and the bibliography, refer to the most current version of the College's Scope of Practice Framework.

Additionally, the RHA/employer should provide the RN/NP with the required education and practice experience to gain and maintain competency of the new/emerging competency and implement the necessary supports to support the practice. Reciprocally, the RN/NP is accountable to engage in the education and practice to build their capacity to perform the competency safely and competently.

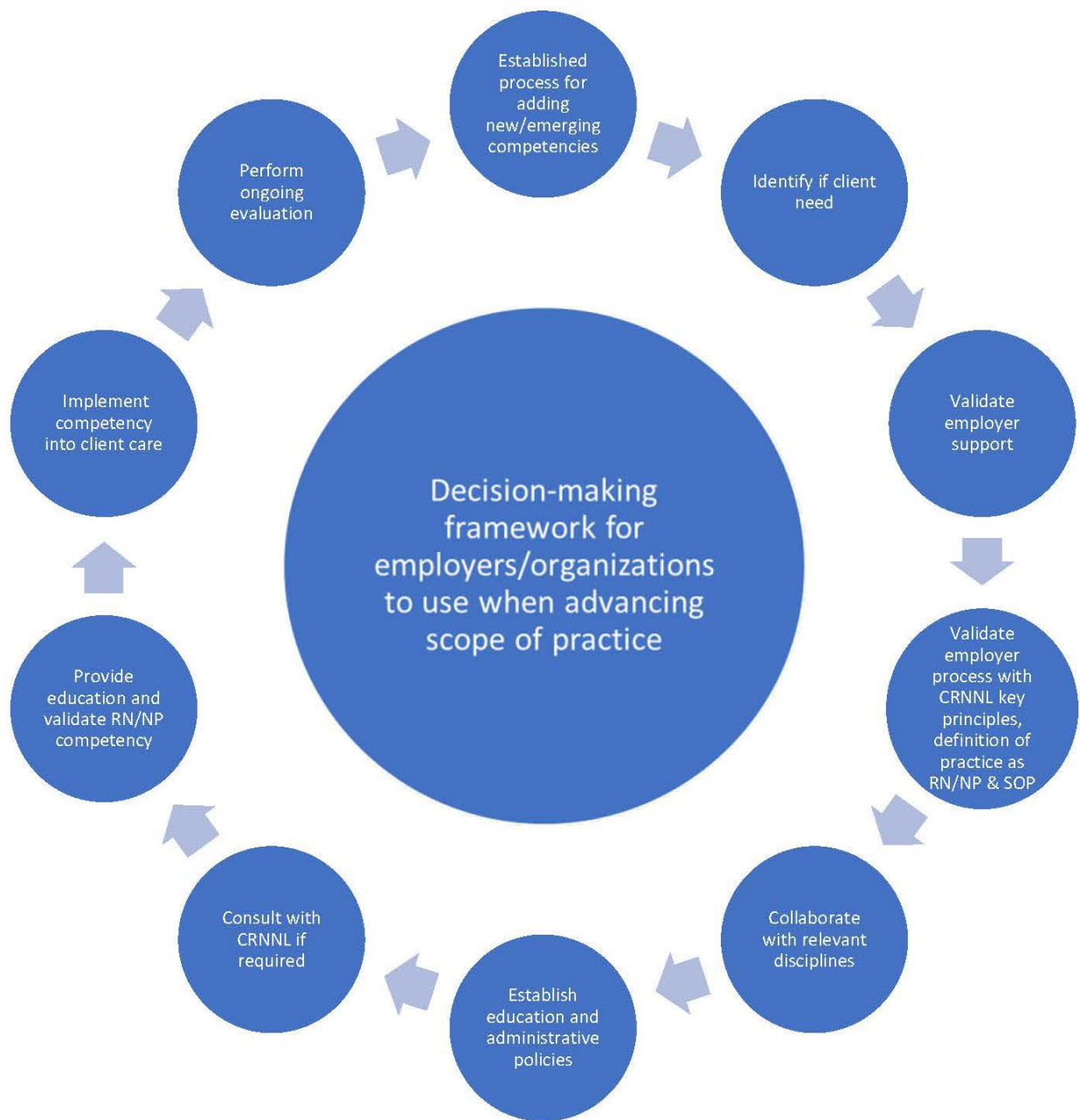
Self-employed RNs/NPs seeking to incorporate new/emerging competencies into their practice are **required** to consult with the College for a determination of whether the competency is considered within the practice of an RN or NP in NL. Please refer to the most current version of the College's Self-Employment document.

Foundational Principles of the College's Decision-Making Framework:

1. Adherence to Legislation and Standards
 - Scope of practice decisions must reflect CRNNL's public protection mandate and adhere to relevant federal and/or provincial legislation and provincial and applicable national practice standards.
2. Support for client needs/ benefits
 - There is an identified client need; the nursing and client advantages of introducing the practice into nursing scope of practice are validated; not based solely upon convenience for various health care professionals.
3. Evidence-informed
 - The decision is supported by evidence-informed literature, best practices, or research and/or clinical evidence.
4. Involves collaboration
 - Input and participation in decision-making is sought from all those impacted by the decision, including between health care professionals across the continuum (e.g., between different organizations/departments/programs if client care is to be provided in different settings).
5. Recognize the unique and shared competencies of all professionals
 - The decision-making process utilized to assign a competency to a discipline recognizes the contributions of all levels of care providers and promotes optimal use of resources.
6. Supported by education and authorized by the employer/organization
 - RNs/NPs obtain and maintain the necessary competence and have employer authorization to perform the competency.
7. Includes an evaluation component
 - The impact of the decision in relation to quality care and nursing services is evaluated on an ongoing basis.
8. Includes documentation of the process
 - The employer should ensure that the process used to determine whether to add a new/emerging competency to the scope of RN/NP practice is documented.

The following diagram presents a step-by-step, decision-making framework RHA/employers may use when reviewing scope of practice requests.

Decision Making Framework (s) for Advancing Scope of Practice



Considerations for Adding a New/Emerging Competency to RN/NP Scope of Practice-

RHAs/employers may consider the following questions when making an informed decision whether to add a new/emerging competency to RN/NP scope of practice within a particular practice setting(s).

Legislation, Scope, and Evidence:

- Does the new competency meet the definition of the practice of as an RN or NP as outlined by the College (See the College's most current version of its Scope of Practice Framework)?
- Has relevant legislation, standards of practice, or policy been examined for any indicators that would prevent the RN/NP from performing the competency?
- Is there credible evidence or evidence-informed best practices to support this addition?
- If available, has any contradictory evidence been considered and evaluated? Is the evidence credible?

If there are unfavourable responses, it is likely there is insufficient information to proceed. Consider consulting with the College.

Client

- Is there an identified client need to perform the identified competency?
- Will adding the proposed competency to RN/NP scope of practice benefit clients?
- What are the consequences of not adding the competency?

If there are unfavourable responses, it is likely there is insufficient information to proceed. Consider further required actions. Consider consulting with appropriate individual(s)/organization(s) and/or the College.

Risk

- Is the level of risk to the clients acceptable?
- Is the level of risk to the RN/NP acceptable?
- Is the level of risk to the employer/organization acceptable?
- Is there a plan to mitigate or manage known risks?
- Has there been consideration of unintended or unexpected outcomes, and is there a plan to manage these?
- Has there been consideration of the possible legal and/or liability implications of adding the new competency?
- Does the RHA/employer require input from legal counsel, employer's quality & risk department, and/or the Canadian Nurses Protective Society, etc.?

If there are unfavourable responses, it is likely there is insufficient information to proceed. Consider consulting with appropriate individual(s)/organization(s) and/or the College.

Employer Support

- Does the competency fit within the context of practice for the unit/practice setting(s) it is proposed for?
- Does the RHA/employer support adding the competency to the RN's/NP's scope of practice?
- Has there been considerations of whether adding the competency may have unintended or unexpected outcomes on RNs'/NPs' workloads and efficiency and is there a plan to manage this?

- Has provider convenience been ruled out as the primary reason for adding the competency to the RN's/NP's scope of practice?
- Is the RHA/employer able to provide the necessary resources and support through policies, procedures, and supervision, etc., if applicable, to enable the RN/NP to develop the required competency(s)?
- Is there a plan or mechanism to monitor and regularly evaluate the ongoing need for and efficacy of the added competency?

If there are unfavourable responses, it is likely there is insufficient information to proceed. Consider consulting with appropriate individual(s)/organization(s) and/or the College.

Competence and Education

- Do RNs/NPs have the necessary knowledge, skills, and judgment to support this addition to their scope of practice?
 - If not, is there an appropriate plan to develop the necessary competencies?
- Is there a plan or mechanism to validate competence in performing the competency?
- Is there an appropriate plan for the review and maintenance of the RN's/NP's competence and is there an appropriate person in the RHA/organization to do this?

If there are unfavourable responses, it is likely there is insufficient information to proceed. Consider further required actions. Consider consulting with appropriate individual(s)/organization(s) and/or the College.

Consultation

- Has there been consideration of the affect the proposed addition will have on the health care team, other health care professionals, and key stakeholders and is there a plan to manage this?
- Have other health professionals or key stakeholders been consulted and informed?

It is important to consider favorable and unfavorable responses in determining whether to proceed with adding a new and/or emerging competency to the profession's scope of practice. Employers are encouraged to create professional practice environments that support quality client care. The RHA's/employer's process for advancing/adding new/emerging competencies to the scope of the profession should reflect RHA/employer responsibilities, as well as RN/NP professional accountability. If an RHA/employer or an RN/NP requires assistance in interpreting whether a competency is appropriate to consider within the scope of practice of an RN or NP, they may consult the College. The College is available for consultation should there be any further questions.