

Cabinet and Governor Appointed Agencies' Performance Audit Action Item(s) & Status**Washington Board of Nursing — Opportunities are Present to Support Efforts by the Board to Speed Licensing**

(See also [cabinet agency response](#) for full context to Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) commissioned [report](#), conducted by TAP International, Inc., January 2023)

The Washington Board of Nursing (WABON) was the only auditee for this performance audit.

Results Summary in brief:

1. In 2021, the WABON took an average of ten weeks to complete the entire licensing process from receipt of the application to the issuance date of the license.
2. Six key factors can contribute to lengthier processing times for licensing.
3. Other states' practices can offer viable options for the WABON to consider in its efforts to ensure quality nursing care.

Recommendations (Rec) Summary:

1. Improve the process for collection of FBI background checks with the Health Systems Quality Assurance (HSQA) agency for licenses by endorsement and multistate licenses. For applicants seeking a license to work only in Washington State, allow WABON greater flexibility, under RCW 18.130.064, in the collection of criminal background checks, such as allowing background check exemptions if the applicant can demonstrate a recently completed criminal background check.
2. Eliminate the requirement for transcripts from WABON-approved nationally accredited nursing schools located in Washington State when the nursing school also provides lists of its graduates to WABON and allow WABON the discretion to request transcripts when needed.
3. Update the license application to collect the applicant's state of residency, physical address, and mailing address.
4. Update the WAC to allow out-of-state applicants from non-traditional nursing schools to be eligible for licensure upon completing 1,000 hours of clinical experience within Washington state.
5. Establish and compute a measure(s) that provides for other assessments of licensing timeliness and performance.
6. Purchase and implement automated technologies like artificial intelligence bots to scan and extract relevant application information versus manually entering licensing applications into ILRS.
7. For licenses to work only in Washington state, continue to issue Temporary Practice Permits (TPPs) for applicants, pending receipt of results of federal background checks.
8. Modify the licensing process to minimize the number of touches by different staff by adopting an alternative staffing strategy, which includes expanding the areas that individual staff can review.
9. As part of the implementation of the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), assess alternative strategies, such as assignments of staff to process specific types of licensing applications versus assigning staff based on exam, endorsement, or international applications.

The table below shows the current status of action items the agency initiated to address issues identified in the performance audit report. Please see the [cabinet agency response](#) for additional context and any additional steps already taken.

For an explanation of the columns below, [see the legend](#).

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 1	Complete	Develop the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) implementation plan, including FBI criminal background checks on all applicants	WABON (NCQAC)	12/24	Yes	Yes – increased cost by volume to issue multistate license (MSL)	No	<p>With the implementation of phase one of the NLC on July 24, 2023, WABON began accepting nurses with an active MSL in another state without having to submit an endorsement application or requiring an FBI background check (this step is already completed in the issuing state).</p> <p>WABON implemented phase two the NLC to issue Washington MSLs as of January 31, 2024. Collaborative planning with the FBI criminal background check team resulted in a streamlined process for applicants.</p>
Rec 1	Complete	Explore amending RCW 18.130.064 with the Health Systems Quality Assurance to improve the collection of FBI criminal background checks	WABON (NCQAC)	9/23	Yes	No	No	<p>WABON/HSQA partnership found mechanisms to implement FBI criminal background checks without increasing licensing time for applicants. The enactment of the NLC provided funding to increase staffing in the DOH FBI Unit to account for an increased volume of FBI background checks.</p> <p>The DOH FBI Unit began implementing the fingerprint LiveScan option which has improved the collection of criminal background checks in a timely manner. No legislative changes were required to implement this recommendation.</p>
Rec 3	In Progress	Explore updating the license application to capture	WABON (NCQAC)	9/23	Yes	No	No	As part of HELMS platform development, subject matter experts from licensing updated the licensing application to increase

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		additional applicant information up front						<p>the capture of information with initial entry. Updated licensure application was complete in Q4 2023.</p> <p>Updated licensure applications were deployed first with HELMS Lite on April 24, 2024, and will be fully in place when the next phase of HELMS implementation is completed in February 2025.</p>
Rec 5	Complete	Negotiate and sign the joint operating agreement at the July WABON meeting	WABON (NCQAC)	7/23	Yes	No	No	Joint Operating Agreement signed in July 2023. Annual review planning underway in collaboration with HSQA.
Rec 5	In Progress	Work with HSQA to develop meaningful performance measures	WABON (NCQAC)	1/24	Yes	No	No	<p>Performance measure related to licensing (and all other work units) presented to HSQA first in December 2023 and quarterly thereafter. Robust process improvement is underway to fully explore meaningful performance metrics for all areas (licensing completed first): turnaround time, volumes, and customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Average time for issuing a RN or LPN TPPs is <7 days.</p>
Rec 5	In Progress	Share outcomes and best practices to measure performance outcomes with DOH and publicly display them on the WABON website	WABON (NCQAC)	2/24	Yes	No	No	<p>WABON external webpage publicly displays four comprehensive dashboards: licensing, education, workforce, and discipline.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings with HSQA to define and review performance metrics. This also includes defining best practices in measurement and understanding our service levels.</p>
Rec 7	Complete	WABON will revise WAC 246-840-095 with reasonable deadlines for the collection of	WABON (NCQAC)	12/23	Yes	No	No	WABON adopted amendments to reduce the length of time a temporary practice permit is active from 180 days after the TPP is issued

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		FBI fingerprints and issue temporary practice permits						<p>to 60 days to align WAC 246-840-095 with the current practice of WABON and to promote completion of the licensure process. The amendments also reduce the extension of the temporary practice permit from 180 days to 30 days. The amendments exclude military spouses in accordance with 2SHB 1009, which requires the board to issue a temporary practice permit, which is active for no less than 180 days, to a person who meets the criteria of RCW 18.340.020, within 30 days of receiving a completed application.</p> <p>WAC effective February 11, 2024.</p>
Rec 8	Complete	Implement the Nurse Licensure Compact requiring Washington to be a member of the Compact Administrators Commission. The commission collects data and research associated with the compact. WABON will adopt rules to fully implement the compact	WABON (NCQAC)	12/25	Yes	No	Yes	<p>Washington State joined the Nurse Licensure Compact effective July 23, 2023. The WABON Executive Director participates as the delegate on the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators (ICNLCA) via quarterly meetings. Data and research related to the NLC are distributed routinely by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN).</p> <p>The Secretary of Health adopted amendments to WAC 246-840-990 to establish new MSL fees effective January 31, 2024. No other rulemaking was required to implement this recommendation.</p>
Rec 8	Waiting on someone else	Fully implement HELMS to aid with data collection and analysis	WABON (NCQAC)	12/24	No	Yes	No	<p>The phase two deployment of HELMS has been delayed and will fully launch in February 2025. All nursing data fields have been submitted as of Q1 2024 and are awaiting full implementation.</p>

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Rec 9	Complete	Consider the findings of the HSQA credentialing process review and explore recommendations for efficiencies gained and process improvements	WABON (NCQAC)	12/24	Yes	No	No	<p>WABON has explored this process and continue to look for best practices within HSQA/WMC, other state boards of nursing, and other regulatory bodies to streamline processes.</p> <p>WABON recently concluded discussions with the Oregon Board of Nursing to explore their licensing process and identify potential improvements.</p>
Rec 9	In Progress	Explore systems used by other state boards of nursing	WABON (NCQAC)	12/24	Yes	No	No	<p>WABON continues to collaborate with boards of nursing and NCSBN to understand best practices and measure standards.</p> <p>In 2025, NCSBN is looking to develop performance metrics for boards of nursing to make data more visible, including licensing data, and be able to more actively learn from states that have best practices in place.</p>
Rec 9	In Progress	Explore systems used by other licensing agencies in the state of Washington	WABON (NCQAC)	12/24	Yes	No	No	WABON continues to collaborate with HSQA, WMC, and DSHS to understand processes with licensure and registration.
Rec 9	In Progress	Work with the Council of Enforcement and Licensing (CLEAR) and Federated Associations of Regulatory Boards (FARB) to gather information on licensing processes	WABON (NCQAC)	12/24	No	Yes	No	WABON plans to directly engage with CLEAR and FARB to gather information on licensing processes to determine if available data will inform potential improvements. The cost of participating in conferences and events sponsored by these organizations has been a barrier. However, access to virtual resources produced by these organizations continue to provide supplemental information in the interim.
Rec 9	In Progress	Compare outcomes of all four data collections and identify	WABON (NCQAC)	7/26	Yes	No	No	WABON is planning for future analysis and comparison once information on licensing

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		similarities and differences and present the findings to the Department of Health						processes is gathered from all identified sources. Findings from a full comparison of outcomes between all four data collections will be shared with DOH.
Rec 10	Deferred	Deferred until after the actions are complete for Recommendation 9	WABON (NCQAC)	TBD	No	Yes	No	The ongoing data collection and analysis described in Recommendation 9 continues to provide evidence to inform changes.