

APPLICANT RESOURCE GUIDE

FOR INITIAL AND
RE-DESIGNATING
APPLICANTS



CONGRATULATIONS!

TO YOU AND YOUR ENTIRE ORGANIZATION FOR TAKING THE FIRST STEPS ON YOUR JOURNEY TO SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE USING THE PATHWAY FRAMEWORK!

This resource guide will assist your organization in preparing for your Pathway Journey and is intended for both initial and redesignating applicants.

ELIGIBILITY

Health care organizations interested in applying for the Pathway to Excellence designation must meet all eligibility criteria. Interested organizations may determine their eligibility to apply by answering the questions found at the following link:

nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway/apply/eligibility

Even health care organizations that do not meet eligibility to apply for Pathway to Excellence designation are encouraged to use the Self-Assessment of the Organizational Culture and the ANCC Pathway to Excellence Framework for Creating Positive Practice Environments™ to strengthen their organization's culture and transform their practice environment.

DISCLAIMER: Answering the eligibility questions does not deem eligibility or ineligibility. The Pathway Program Office (PPO) will review your information to make a formal determination of your eligibility to apply.

ESSENTIAL STEPS ON YOUR JOURNEY TO PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE®



PRE-APPLICATION

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

Confirm eligibility to apply for Pathway designation.

Review the current Pathway Standards and Elements of Performance (EOPs).

Perform a self-assessment of your organization's culture and conduct a gap analysis.

Purchase and review the [Pathway to Excellence Application Manual](#) (print and electronic versions available) and any clarifications made about the current criteria.

RESOURCES

- [Pathway to Excellence Website](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence – ROI](#) (to demonstrate potential cost savings and ROI based on own organization's data)
- [Pathway-Designated Organizations Testimonials and Case Studies](#)
- [Self-Assessment of Organizational Culture](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Business Case Video – Introduction to Pathway for Leaders](#)
- [Introducing Your Nursing Team to Pathway to Excellence Video](#)
- [Pathway Fee Calculator](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence® General FAQs](#)
- [Pathway Pre-Intent Program \(PIP\) Membership](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Conference](#)
- [FREE Pathway Webinars](#)
- [Pathway Program Guidance Workshops: *The Journey*](#)



APPLICATION REGISTRATION

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

Complete the Pathway Applicant Registration (PAR) in the [Pathway Application Portal](#) to submit your intent to apply for Pathway designation and to request your desired document submission cycle.

- There are five Pathway Standards Document (PSD) submission dates: February 1, April 1, June 1, August 1, and November 1.
- Contact the PPO if you are unsure about your organization's eligibility to apply or the appropriate PSD submission timeline.

Submit supporting documents for the PAR:

1. Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) or Director of Nursing (DON) curriculum vitae (CV)
2. Organizational chart(s) that reflects the:
 - a. Reporting structure and CNO's/DON's relationship with executive leadership,
 - b. CNO's/DON's oversight of nursing services, and
 - c. All campus(es) under the CNO's/DON's accountability, as applicable.
3. Organization's operating license or other official verification of licensed beds.

CNO/DON: Submit signed "ANA Pathway Agreement" to PPO.

Submit applicant registration fee ([see Pathway website for details](#)).

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE

- Once the agreement is signed and payment is received, the PPO will review the PAR and contact you with questions.
- After review is complete, you will receive an email confirmation of your requested document submission date.

RESOURCES

- [Pathway to Excellence Website](#)
- [Pathway Application Portal](#)
- [Pathway Learning Community](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Application Manual](#)
- [Pathway Program Guidance Workshops: *The Journey*](#)
- [Pathway Pre-Intent Program \(PIP\) Membership](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Workbook](#)



PLANNING FOR THE APPRAISAL PROCESS AND PREPARING THE PATHWAY STANDARDS DOCUMENT (PSD)

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

Schedule Welcome Call with assigned Senior Pathway Program Analyst.

Submit Pathway Learning Community (PLC) member roster to indicate who will be granted PLC access.

- Include team members such as champions and front-line nurses as well as CNO and PPD
- Note approved PSD submission cycle. Due date to submit PSD

Reference the Pathway manual and [Document Submission Guide](#) for the PSD requirements:

- Organizational Overview (OO), Table of Contents (TOC), Organizational Demographic Form (ODF), Glossary, and Elements of Performance (EOPs) for the six Pathway Standards (PS).

Gather the associated descriptions, examples, narratives, and documented evidence.

Refer to “Dates in PSD” graphic for information on dates associated with the submission of the PSD on [page 13](#).

Utilize the associated Excel form and instructions ([PTE version](#) or [PTE-LTC version](#) as appropriate) for the ODF.

Refer to Magnet-Pathway Criteria Crosswalk if you are pursuing dual designation.

Attend monthly Open Forum Calls with the Analysts. If unable to attend, review the summary of updates and discussions found in the PLC.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE

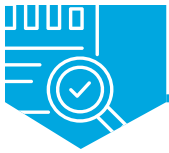
- Notification of PLC access will be sent to those listed on the submitted PLC roster.



PLANNING FOR THE APPRAISAL PROCESS AND PREPARING PATHWAY STANDARDS DOCUMENT (PSD) CONTINUED

RESOURCES

- [Pathway to Excellence® and Pathway to Excellence in Long Term Care® Application Manual](#)
- [Pathway Program Guidance Workshops: Writing to the Standards](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Workbook](#)
- [eBook-Pathway Electronic Flashcards](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence® Document Submission Guide](#)
- [Pathway Learning Community](#)
 - Open Forum Calls
 - Analyst Corner
 - Mentorship Platform
 - Discussion Forum
 - Resource Center (supplemental documents, modules, and templates)
 - Magnet-Pathway Criteria Crosswalk



DOCUMENT REVIEW

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

Upload PSD to the [Pathway Application Portal](#).

If requested, upload additional information (AI) responses to the [Pathway Application Portal](#) within 15 business days of request.

All six Pathway Standards must be met to move to Pathway Survey.

Refer to the figure on [page 19](#) for possible outcomes of PSD review.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE

- Appraisal of the PSD takes up to eight weeks from the time of submission.
- Written AI documentation may be requested from appraisers.
- Applicants unsuccessful at the document review stage are notified by the PPO.
- Appraisers prepare a PSD summary report for the Commission on Pathway to Excellence (COPE) based on your organization's submitted PSD.

RESOURCES

- [Pathway to Excellence Website](#)
- [Pathway Application Portal](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Application Manual](#)
- [Pathway Program Guidance Workshops: *The Journey and Writing to the Standards*](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Document Submission Guide](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence Workbook](#)
- [eBook-Pathway Electronic Flashcards](#)
- [Pathway Pre-Intent Program \(PIP\) Membership](#)
- [Pathway Learning Community](#)
 - Open Forum Calls
 - Analyst Corner
 - Mentorship Platform
 - Discussion Forum
 - Resource Center (supplemental documents, modules, 2016-2020 Pathway manual crosswalk and additional templates)



SURVEY

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

Review “Nurse Survey-Doc Download” in portal.

Complete “Survey Prep Checklist” tasks as listed in portal.

- Complete technical compatibility test.
- Complete Eligible Respondents Report (ERR).

When the above is completed, determine ideal date for survey launch.

Contact PPO to schedule “Survey Readiness” call.

Survey Readiness call date

Survey launch date

Survey close date

One week prior to survey launch, download “Instructions for Survey Respondents” and “Pathway to Excellence Nurse Survey FAQ”; distribute documents to all eligible nurses as an invitation to participate in the survey from the CNO/DON.

Eligible respondents complete the voluntary and confidential Pathway Survey within the approved survey period.

Review and share weekly Pathway Survey progress reports.

If applicant’s appraisal process is unsuccessful, they are denied designation. [See “Possible Outcomes” on page 19.](#)

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE

- If all standards are met, the PPO informs the applicant organization of advancement to the survey phase by email.
- Progress reports providing preliminary response rate performance are posted weekly in applicant’s portal account.
- Final survey results are provided when an applicant organization is informed of the Pathway application outcome.



SURVEY CONTINUED

RESOURCES

- [Pathway to Excellence website](#)
- [Pathway Application Portal](#)
- [Pathway to Excellence® and Pathway to Excellence in Long Term Care® Application Manual](#)
- [Pathway Program Guidance Workshops: *The Journey*](#)
- [Pathway Pre-Intent Program \(PIP\)](#)
- [Pathway Learning Community](#)
 - Discussion Forum
 - Mentorship Platform
 - Resource Center (supplemental documents, modules, and templates)



DESIGNATION DECISION

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

An organization that achieves designation is required to:

Disseminate the designation letter that amplifies what it means to work for a Pathway-designated facility to your health care team.

Complete the [Contact Information Form \(CIF\)](#) in its entirety and submit it to pathwayinfo@ana.org.

Schedule post-designation call with Pathway Senior RN Specialist.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE

- Notification of decision may take up to eight weeks from conclusion of Pathway Survey period.
- An applicant that successfully passes the appraisal process is awarded the Pathway to Excellence designation (four years).
- If applicant's **appraisal process is unsuccessful, they are denied designation**. See "Possible Outcomes" on [page 20](#).

RESOURCES

[Pathway to Excellence Application Manual](#)



POST-DESIGNATION

APPLICANT ACTION ITEMS

Designation is awarded for a four-year period. During this time, organizations should:

Submit the Interim Monitoring Report during mid-cycle year (ODF and CIF). Please see [IMR requirements](#).

Hardwire infrastructures and processes within the organization, ensuring that the shared governance structure is effective and relevant.

Save Pathway Resource page and ANA website to your favorites for free webinars and special Pathway events year-round.

Continue to engage in the PLC for up-to-date information and resources.

Consider submitting an innovative project proposal for the ANCC Pathway Award.

Engage team to submit for podium or poster presentations at local and national conferences, including the ANCC Pathway to Excellence Conference®.

Encourage staff to identify high performers as candidates for nominations for the Pathway Nurse of the Year Awards (nurse leader and direct care nurse awards).

Consider inviting your local community, public officials, stakeholders, American Nurses Association/Constituent and State Nurses Association (C/SNA), and others that have contributed to the success of your Pathway Journey when planning celebratory events.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE

- PPO will contact applicant to schedule:
 - Mid-designation check-in (year two of designation).
 - Application for redesignation check-in (year three of designation).

RESOURCES

[Interim Monitoring Report:
ODF Instructions and Form](#)

[Pathway Program Guidance Workshops:
Sustaining a Culture of Excellence](#)

[Nurse Graduate Resources](#)

[Pathway Learning Community](#)

PATHWAY RESOURCES

ANCC PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE® WEBSITE

Primary resource for information about the Pathway to Excellence and Pathway to Excellence in Long Term Care programs. Helpful resources are available, including case studies and testimonials about the benefits of Pathway designation, the application process, frequently asked questions, and the Library of Pathway Associated Concepts.

nursingworld.org/pathway

PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A tool for applicants to conduct a gap analysis comparing the organization's current state against the desired state — the Pathway Standards. The assessment determines how Pathway aligns with the organization's mission and values. It's a valuable approach for front-line staff and leaders to identify opportunities as well as celebrate the great things in place.

The tool is available as a free [PDF](#) document and for purchase as an [electronic version](#) (see [Pathway website](#)). Findings gathered from either version are for internal purposes and are not required for submission to the PPO.

ROI

A [slide presentation template](#) for presenting the Pathway to Excellence business case to leaders, including projected return on investment and cost avoidance.

PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE APPLICANT WORKSHOP™*

[Series of educational programs](#) for nursing leaders and key front-line staff who support the Pathway Journey. For further information about additional workshop options (e.g. regional or hosted workshops), contact the PPO at pathwayinfo@ana.org.

2021 PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE® WORKBOOK*

An [easy-to-use workbook](#) with exercises to help organizations launch their Pathway Journey. This resource is a great supplement to the Pathway to Excellence® workshops. The workbook provides strategies for creating a vision, celebrating progress, and establishing a shared decision-making structure; guidance in understanding the intent of the Pathway to Excellence Elements of Performance (EOPs); recommended questions to initiate the discussion of the EOPs with the health care team; and stellar examples of the Pathway framework at health care organizations. The workbook includes resources like Pathway-related articles to support journal club programs and other initiatives.

* Cost associated.

QUESTIONS? Contact us at pathwayinfo@ana.org.

MAGNET-PATHWAY CRITERIA CROSSWALK

A list of **Sources of Evidence (SOEs) and EOPs** deemed acceptable for organizations seeking dual designation in the Pathway to Excellence and Magnet programs. Various crosswalks are available dependent on manuals appropriate for reference. Ensure selection of crosswalk is based on the *Pathway to Excellence™ Application Manual* and *Magnet® Application Manual* correct for your organization.

PATHWAY PRE-INTENT PROGRAM (PIP)*

A **year-long program** that provides structured guidance to health care organizations embarking on the Pathway Journey. It is designed to assist organizations as they navigate through the application process, timeline, Pathway document, and Pathway Survey requirements.

PATHWAY LEARNING COMMUNITY (PLC)

An **exclusive online community** for nurses committed to creating positive practice environments and promoting a culture of excellence. The PLC provides an opportunity for nurses to connect and share best practices, resources, research, and strategies.

OPEN FORUM CALLS

Bimonthly conference calls moderated by Pathway to Excellence staff. Calls are open to all official applicants and designated organizations.

ANCC PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE CONFERENCE®*

Annual conference aimed at pointing organizations toward the path of nursing excellence, providing an avenue for networking with nursing colleagues from the Pathway community, and celebrating designated/redesignated organizations. Typical sessions focus on aligning nursing environments to the Pathway Standards and improving nurse job satisfaction, staff engagement, well-being, and organizational outcomes.

OTHER PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE PRESENTATIONS

Pathway provides ongoing resources and support to applicant organizations throughout their journey. Refer to the Pathway website for further information.

PATHWAY PROGRAM OFFICE (PPO) STAFF

The **PPO** is dedicated to serving as a resource and may be available to present at health care organizations upon request.

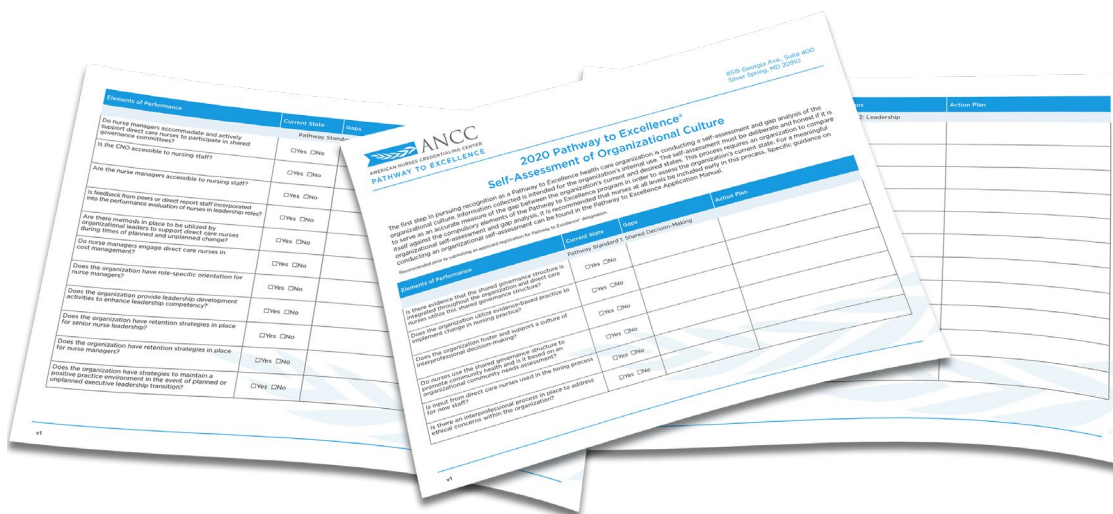
* Cost associated.

QUESTIONS? Contact us at pathwayinfo@ana.org.

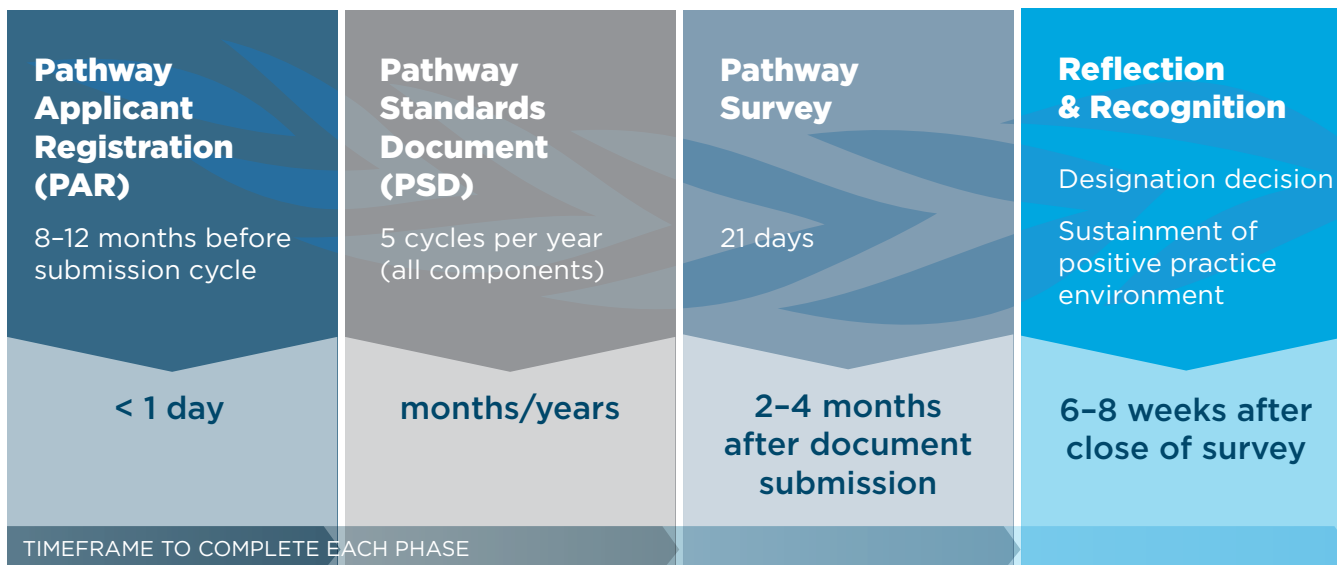
ASSESSMENT AND TIMELINE

ASSESSMENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The Pathway to Excellence Self-Assessment of the Organizational Culture is crucial for the Journey to Pathway designation. Conducting an assessment, involving nurses at all levels, aids in identifying gaps between your organization’s current state and the desired state of a positive practice environment. Go to nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway/apply/pre-application to select the appropriate assessment tool for your acute-care and long-term care setting.



PATHWAY APPLICATION TIMELINE



PATHWAY APPLICANT REGISTRATION (PAR)

All Pathway applicant materials are submitted to the Pathway Program Office via the Pathway Online Portal at [Pathway Online Portal](#). To begin the PAR, you must register your organization by creating an account. Registration includes uploading supporting documents (PDF format) for eligibility purposes, including:

CNO's or DON's current CV reflecting role at the applicant organization

Organizational chart reflecting the CNO's/DON's relationship with executive leadership, oversight of nursing services, and additional campuses or branches, as appropriate

Current operating license or/and independent verification of licensed beds or annual visits, as appropriate

CNO/DON Attestation of Agreement

AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER

Please enter your email address and password to log-in to the Pathway Online Portal. If you are a new user, please click the "Register Account" button. If the Pathway Program Office (PPO) has notified you that you already have an account, please enter the email address provided by the PPO and click "Forgot Password" and follow the reset password prompts.

Pathway to Excellence Online Review System

Email Address:

Password:

If you do not have an account already, please click the button below to register for an account with our online system.

A non-refundable PAR fee is due at the time of application.

ANCC accepts various payment options. Check payments are remitted to:

ANCC Pathway
P.O. Box 505035
St. Louis, MO 63150-5035

PATHWAY STANDARDS DOCUMENT (PSD) REMINDERS

MAGNET-PATHWAY CRITERIA CROSSWALK

In April 2018, the Commissions on Magnet Recognition Program® and Pathway to Excellence Program® completed an evaluation of each program's standards to determine if any conceptual relationships existed between required elements. This evaluation resulted in 10 required Sources of Evidence (SOEs) and 12 required Elements of Performance (EOPs), which were determined to be highly correlated while also being uniquely different. For more information about the crosswalk between the Pathway to Excellence EOPs and Magnet SOEs, please refer to nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway/apply.

PORTABLE DOCUMENT FORMAT (PDF) BOOKMARKING TIPS

- **Have a computer filing system for your Pathway Standards Document and a folder for each Pathway Standard.**
 - Create a sub-folder for each EOP with sub-folders for associated exhibits and draft and final versions of the EOP response.
 - Name the EOP and exhibit files to correspond with the EOP to make retrieval and insertion into the larger document easier.
- **When the Word versions of the EOP responses are edited and ready to publish, begin the process of combining the responses to make the file for the individual Pathway Standards. If you have never done PDF bookmarking before, here are some ideas for how to get started:**
 - Find and view some YouTube videos on PDF bookmarking. There are multiple versions of software for generating PDF files, and finding an associated video or other instruction for the version you have access to will be most useful.
 - Put together a practice document to test out and perfect your PDF bookmarking skills.
 - There are likely people you work with who are confident in their PDF bookmarking ability. Consider checking with a colleague from one or more of these areas to help you get started:
 - IT
 - Administrative support
 - Someone who recently completed graduate studies

▲
This person could sit with you as you bookmark and insert exhibits for one standard and by the second standard you will be a pro!

DATE REQUIREMENTS IN THE PATHWAY STANDARDS DOCUMENT (PSD)

<p>NO DATE REQUIREMENT</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW (OO)</p> <p>Dates not required. Must be current (e.g., current CNO CV, current mission, number of licensed beds, FTEs, etc.)</p>	<p>12 MONTHS</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC FORM (ODF)</p> <p>Organization chooses a 12-month reporting period (calendar, fiscal, or another completed 12-month reporting period). If most internal reports use fiscal year, use the most recently completed fiscal year data. Submit data for the most recently completed 12-month period.</p>	<p>36 MONTHS</p> <p>ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE (EOP)</p> <p>The date the example occurred must be included with the response. The date (month/year) must be within 36 months of the document submission date. For example, the date window for a Pathway Applicant Organization with PSD date of November 1, 2022 is October 30, 2019 to October 30, 2022.</p>
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WEBINARS

PHASE I

Application & Registration

WATCH NOW




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PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE

PHASE II

Document Submission

WATCH NOW



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PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE

WATCH NOW

FREE ON-DEMAND Webinar

THE NATIONAL IMPERATIVE TO IMPROVE NURSING HOMES

Challenges for Nursing



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WATCH NOW

Pathway & DAISY Webinar Series

POWERING RESILIENCE



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PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE

The DAISY FOUNDATION™
HONORING NURSES INTERNATIONALLY
IN MEMORY OF J. PATRICK BARNES

PATHWAY SURVEY



The Pathway Survey is an integral part of the appraisal process for organizations applying for Pathway to Excellence designation. Only those applicant organizations that meet the survey thresholds achieve designation. The ANCC administers the confidential survey. Nurses and non-nurse midwives (and UAPs or CNAs for PTE-LTC organizations) at all levels throughout the applicant organization are invited to participate in the survey to share their perceptions of the workplace environment. Responses from the Pathway Survey validate that the Pathway Standards are in place and integrated at applicant organization.

The survey asks respondents about the presence of essential elements of a positive work environment as defined by the current application manual. Refer to the [Pathway Survey FAQs](#) for topics covered in the Pathway Survey.

PATHWAY SURVEY READINESS

Upon approval of the Pathway Standards Document, you will be notified by the Pathway Program Office of advancement to the Pathway Survey phase. Applicants are required to launch the survey within 45 days of notification that their application has advanced to the Pathway Nurse Survey phase. In preparation for the survey, organizations should complete the following tasks:

- **View Survey Module in the PLC.**
- **Read Instructions and Eligible Respondents sections in the [Pathway Online Portal](#).**
- **Complete the Eligible Respondents Report (ERR).**
Note: The number of responses on the final survey results reflects a preliminary response rate. Applicants are notified of the final participation rate at the time of notification of the designation decision. Refer to the Eligible Respondents Report description in the [Pathway Application Manual](#) chapter on the Pathway to Excellence Survey.
- **Conduct a technical compatibility test using the “Pathway to Excellence Survey Preparation” instructions.**
- **Contact the Pathway Program Office to schedule a “Survey Readiness” call.**
- **Download the Pathway Survey FAQs.**
- **Download the Pathway to Excellence Instructions for Survey Respondents created for your organization.**

- Distribute the FAQs and instructions to all eligible survey respondents (refer to snapshot below).

The screenshot shows the header of the ANCC Pathway to Excellence survey FAQ. The ANCC logo is on the left, with the text "AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER" and "PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE". To the right, the address "8515 Georgia Ave., Suite 400, Silver Spring, MD 20910" and the website "nursingworld.org" are listed. The main title is "Pathway to Excellence® Survey Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)". Below the title, there are two sections: "What is the purpose of the Pathway to Excellence® survey?" and "What kinds of questions about the workplace environment does the Pathway survey ask?".

ANCC
AMERICAN NURSES CREDENTIALING CENTER
PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE

8515 Georgia Ave., Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910
nursingworld.org

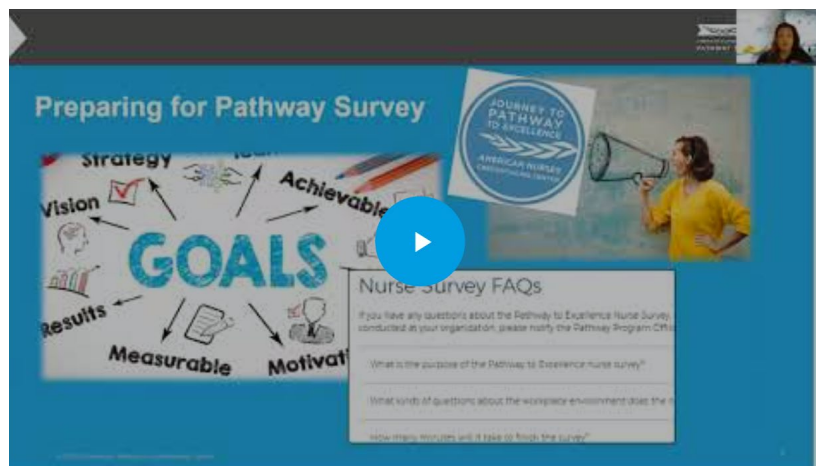
Pathway to Excellence® Survey Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the purpose of the Pathway to Excellence® survey?

The Pathway survey is an integral part of the appraisal process for organizations applying for American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Pathway to Excellence® designation. The survey invites nurses and non-nurse midwives at all levels throughout the applicant organization to share their perceptions of the workplace environment. Responses from the Pathway Survey provide information complementary to the application materials the applicant organization has submitted to the Pathway program.

What kinds of questions about the workplace environment does the Pathway survey ask?

- Link to webinar: nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway/resources




PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

As the governing body of the Pathway to Excellence, the Commission on Pathway to Excellence does the following:

- Conducts a thorough review of the applicant's Pathway Standards Document (PSD) and survey results.
- Determines awarding of Pathway to Excellence or Pathway to Excellence in Long Term Care designation.
- The applicant CNO is notified of the outcome of their Pathway application.

The possible outcomes and associated next steps are as follows:

DESIGNATION DENIED	The organization's document did not meet threshold of EOPs required for additional information, and thus the review is concluded, and the organization is denied designation. A call will be scheduled with the program office to discuss this outcome.
	The applicant organization has not met one or more Pathway Survey thresholds and is denied designation. Reminder: all criteria for the PSD must be met prior to advancing to the Pathway Survey stage. Applicants may request to re-administer the Pathway Survey (fees apply).
DESIGNATED 	The applicant organization has met all thresholds for the PSD and Pathway Survey and receives designation.