



The APPFA[®] Value Case Toolkit:

*Building the Strategic and Financial
Case for Seeking Accreditation*

**Advanced Practice Provider
Fellowship Accreditation**

 American Nurses Credentialing Center



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APPFA Overview

The following overview introduces the ANCC Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Program (APPFA®) and its value to both APPs and organizations.

The ANCC Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Program (APPFA®) provides an evidence-based framework for fellowship programs that transition advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) and physician assistants/associates (PAs) into practice and new specialty settings. The APPFA framework facilitates the creation and improvement of structures for APRNs and PAs transitioning into practice giving them time and support to expand the knowledge, skills, and attitudes. APP fellowship programs give the learners time to move from entry-level competence toward proficiency and expertise to deliver safe, quality care by creating robust and comprehensive programs.

APPFA accredited programs for:

- APP Fellowships for providers with less than 12 months' experience
- APP Fellowships for experienced providers to master a new clinical setting

APPFA accreditation is adaptable and inclusive, recognizing programs across a wide range of organizational sizes and specialties. APPFA standards are designed to be adaptable and applicable to diverse environments.

BENEFITS FOR ORGANIZATIONS:

- **Alignment with National Standards:** APPFA aligns with the National Academy of Medicine's *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* recommendations and integrates national competencies, providing a validated framework to ensure transition programs meet national standards.
- **Utilizes Evidence-Based Criteria:** APPFA helps organizations create robust, evidence-based programs that support APRNs and PAs transitioning into new roles or settings, enhancing overall program quality.
- **Enhanced Recruitment and Retention:** Accredited programs demonstrate higher completion rates signaling a strong commitment to professional development and practice excellence, which in turn reduces costly turnover.

- **Alignment with Magnet® and Pathway to Excellence®:** APPFA accreditation complements Magnet and Pathway to Excellence by strengthening APRN and PA practice and professional development structures.
 - **Increased Job Satisfaction:** APRNs and PAs report higher satisfaction with APPFA-accredited programs due to the supportive environment and clear expectations.
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BENEFITS FOR APRNS AND PAS

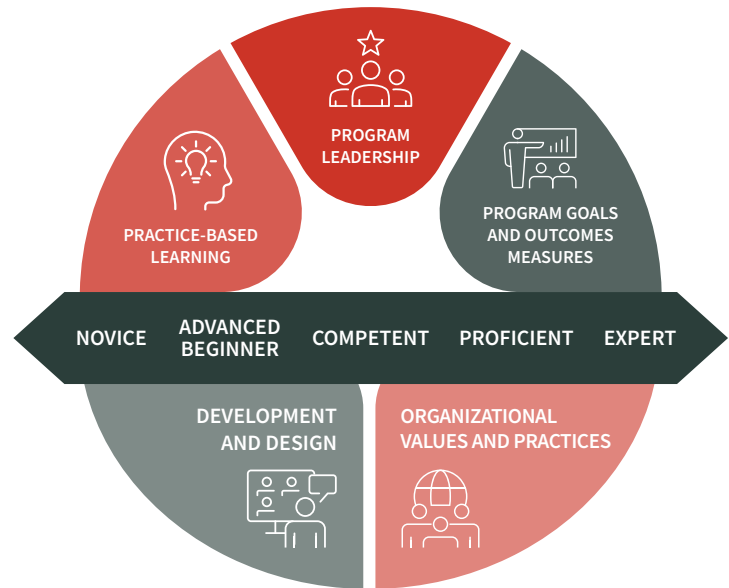
- **Smoother Transition to Practice:** Provides clear guidance, mentorship, and accelerated competence and confidence for newly licensed or experienced APRNs and PAs adapting to new clinical and specialty settings.
 - **Professional Development:** Provides lifelong learning, reflection, and leadership skills aligned with Dreyfus' Framework.
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BENEFITS FOR PATIENTS

- **Safer, Higher-Quality Care:** APPFA-accredited programs provide APRNs and PAs with structured support and preceptor guidance, closing knowledge gaps and improving clinical reasoning for improved patient safety and quality care.
- **Consistent, Competent Practice:** APPFA accreditation ensures rigorous, evidence-based standards that boost APRN and PA competency, teamwork, and judgment, leading to fewer errors and better outcomes across all care settings.

APPFA Framework

The ANCC Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Program (APPFA®) model, grounded in Dreyfus' Framework, guides Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants/Associates from entry-level competence toward proficiency and expertise. Its five domains provide a structured, evidence-based foundation that expands knowledge, skills, and attitudes, supporting safe, confident transitions into practice and driving excellence in patient care.



- **Program Leadership:** refers to the oversight of development, design, implementation, and evaluation of the program by the Program Director and key interested parties.
- **Program Goals and Outcome Measures:** refers to the quantitative and qualitative measures of the overall impact of the program in alignment with program goals.
- **Organizational Values and Practices:** refers to the processes by which learners are introduced to an organization's values and practices (i.e., culture) and each learner's profession.
- **Development and Design:** refers to the processes of establishing an infrastructure for the program that focuses on competency requirements, curriculum development, and educational design.
- **Practice-Based Learning:** refers to the learning that occurs in the fellowship program and how it is applied in the clinical setting under the guidance of preceptors, mentors, and/or other experienced healthcare professionals. These learning opportunities are designed to facilitate competence in the standards of practice and professional performance of the learner.

What Are APPFA Organizations Saying?

The ANCC Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Program (APPFA®) continues to demonstrate measurable value and strong satisfaction among accredited organizations. Feedback from the 2025 Annual Report and the External Customer Satisfaction Survey highlights the program's impact on workforce stability, professional development, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and Physician Assistant excellence.

PROGRAM REACH AND IMPACT

- As of April 2026, 63 programs are accredited across 126 sites.
- Average cohort length: 11.9 months, with an average length precepted 1:1 time of 33.6 weeks.
- Average annual program size: 9 fellows, with an average number of 2.4 cohorts annually.
- Growth of Fellowship Enrollment: As of September 2025, 484 Fellows were enrolled compared to 199 in 2024.

APPFA recognition positions organizations as employers of choice and enhances the overall transition-to-practice experience.

ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS

- 100% of customers report being very satisfied with APPFA customer service.
- Accreditation elevated the credibility and visibility of the fellowship, assuring candidates and institutional leaders of the program's rigor and quality.
- Accreditation gives program visibility and credibility that enables organizations to attract talented advanced practice providers from across the country who are seeking a high-quality fellowship experience.
- Financial sustainability and leadership support ensure long-term program success.
- APPFA principles are embedded into onboarding and education, reinforcing evidence-based practices.
- Accreditation strengthens programs through formal succession planning and evaluation processes, ensuring quality education and learner protection.

KEY VALUE DRIVERS



Credibility & Recognition: Validates program quality and enhances organizational reputation.



Workforce Stability: Structured support, mentorship, and clear expectations help attract and retain high-performing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants.



Quality & Standardization: Creates a consistent, evidence-based framework for onboarding and transition-to-practice programs.



Professional Development: Builds Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants' confidence and competence, aligned with Dreyfus' Framework.



Customer Support: The APPFA team is widely recognized for responsiveness and expert guidance.

IMPACT ON JOB SATISFACTION

APPFA organizations report stronger morale, increased engagement, and a culture of excellence supported by:

- Structured onboarding, mentorship, and resources that help APRNs and PAs feel valued.
- Structured pathways for competency development that boost confidence and engagement.
- A sense of professional pride and organizational loyalty.
- Support for wellness and resilience through a culture grounded in excellence.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- APPFA serves as a benchmark for quality, supporting ongoing organizational learning, and sustainability.
- Accreditation validates program quality and credibility, provides national recognition, and reinforces a stable, well-prepared advanced practice provider workforce.
- Successful programs emphasize early team engagement, leadership involvement, and active use of ANCC resources.
- APPFA is viewed as a strategic investment that advances advanced practice provider excellence and long-term organizational success.

Accreditation Timeline



PREPARATION PHASE (VARIABLE)

- Timeframe depends on gap analysis findings and the organization's readiness to meet APPFA eligibility and standards.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION → SELF-STUDY SUBMISSION (APPROX. 4 MONTHS)

- Includes documentation preparation, submission, and review.

SELF-STUDY SUBMISSION → APPRAISAL REVIEW → LEARNER SURVEY (APPROX. 4-6 MONTHS)

- Appraisal review includes evaluation of self-study, learner survey, and virtual visit.



Elevator Speech

APPFA accreditation is a strategic investment that sets the global standard for advanced practice provider fellowship programs. It demonstrates our commitment to supporting Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants/Associates as they transition into practice while building confidence, competence, and long-term retention. APPFA programs deliver higher provider satisfaction, lower turnover, and better patient outcomes, resulting in cost savings and stronger organizational performance. By aligning with Magnet® and Pathway to Excellence®, APPFA positions us as a leader in advanced practice provider excellence and a top destination for talent. The return on investment is cultural, clinical, and financial; let us lead the way in creating a workforce that stays, grows, and delivers exceptional care.

Executive Summary

PURPOSE

Building upon the ANCC’s evidence-based APPFA framework, this proposal highlights the benefits and organizational impact of pursuing accreditation. This executive summary outlines the strategic value and organizational benefits of pursuing the Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Program (APPFA®), developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

BACKGROUND

APPFA provides a globally recognized framework for developing and sustaining high-quality transition-to-practice programs for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants/Associates. It supports both newly licensed and experienced advanced practice providers (APPs) entering new clinical roles or specialty areas through a fellowship model. The program is grounded in evidence-based standards and aligns with global priorities for APP workforce development and excellence while promoting confidence, competence, and retention.

BENEFITS FOR THE ORGANIZATION



Global Recognition:

Accreditation distinguishes our organization as a premier employer for advanced practice providers committed to lifelong learning and professional growth.



Financial and Operational Impact:

Reduced turnover and onboarding costs result in measurable savings and increased workforce stability.



Improved Recruitment and Retention:

Accredited programs attract top Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and Physician Assistant talent and reduce costly turnover by enhancing satisfaction and professional support.



Alignment with National Standards:

APPFA aligns with the National Academy of Medicine’s *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* recommendations and integrates national competencies, providing a validated framework to ensure transition programs meet national standards.



Alignment with Magnet® and Pathway to Excellence®:

APPFA complements Magnet and Pathway by strengthening advanced practice provider practice and professional development structures, reinforcing our reputation for quality and innovation.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that our organization pursue APPFA to strengthen its advanced practice provider transition programs, align with national best practices, and support workforce sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation (APPFA®) represents a strategic investment in advanced practice provider development, patient care quality, and organizational resilience. By adopting this framework, the organization can ensure its transition programs are both effective and nationally recognized.

Journey to Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation

PURPOSE OF APPFA

To recognize organizations for excellence in Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants transition to practice through structured, evidence-based fellowship programs. This elevates program standards and provides structure and mentorship to transition from entry-level competence toward proficiency and expertise.

BENEFITS OF APPFA

- Enhances advanced practice provider retention and satisfaction.
- Improves patient outcomes and safety.
- Strengthens organizational reputation and culture of excellence.

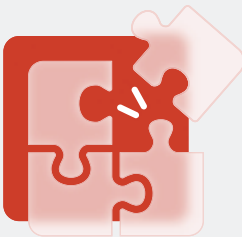
PHASE 1

READINESS & COMMITMENT

- Secure leadership buy-in and allocate necessary resources
- Review the [ANCC 2027 Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation \(APPFA®\) Application Manual](#) and confirm eligibility
- Access the [Getting Started Guide](#) for accreditation guidance
- Conduct a [gap analysis](#) to identify areas for improvement
- Consider attending an [APPFA Introductory Workshop](#)



PHASE 2



PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Assign a Program Director and define key stakeholder roles
- Develop a project timeline and budget
- Educate team on APPFA requirements and expectations

PHASE 3

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Align the fellowship program with the ANCC APPFA standards:
 - » Program Leadership
 - » Program Goals and Outcome Measures
 - » Organizational Values and Practices
 - » Development and Design
 - » Practice-Based Learning
- Create structures and processes for each standard
- Engage stakeholders across departments
- Build faculty, preceptor, and mentor support systems



PHASE 4



IMPLEMENTATION

- Launch the fellowship program
- Collect baseline and ongoing data and feedback
- Monitor and adjust the program continuously for improvement

PHASE 5

APPLICATION & SELF STUDY PREPARATION

- Submit an application to ANCC APPFA team once program meets eligibility requirements
- Compile evidence and documentation for the self study
- Write self-study narratives aligned with APPFA standards
- Have team read and edit self study document



PHASE 6



SUBMISSION & APPRAISAL REVIEW

- Submit the self-study to ANCC APPFA team
- Respond to clarifications or requests
- Complete the learner survey (required)
- Prepare for and host the virtual site visit

PHASE 7

ACCREDITATION DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

- Host ANCC APPFA decision call
- Celebrate and communicate the achievement
- Maintain compliance and pursue continuous improvement
- Begin planning for reaccreditation



Tips for Success:

Advice for Programs Considering Accreditation

START EARLY AND PLAN AHEAD

- Begin the process early to allow time for preparation and writing.
- Develop a timeline and structured work plan.
- Budget dedicated time for accreditation tasks.
- Gather and organize materials well in advance.

UNDERSTAND AND USE STANDARDS/MANUAL

- Thoroughly review APPFA standards before starting to confirm that the program upholds the expectations of accreditation.
- Use the accreditation manual as a guide for program design.
- Align curriculum, evaluation tools, and policies with standards.
- Perform gap analysis to identify areas needing improvement.

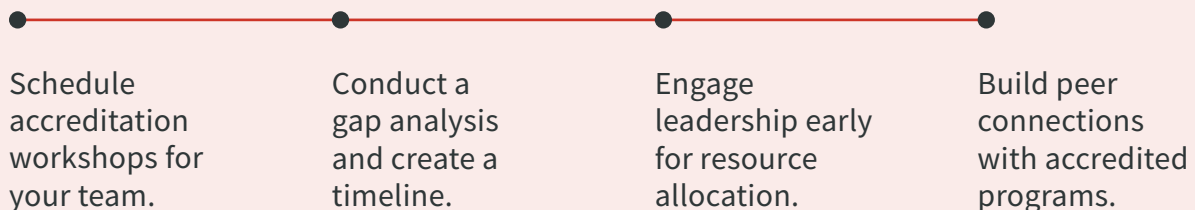
LEVERAGE RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY

- Attend workshops, webinars, and conferences for guidance.
- Network with other programs that have completed accreditation.
- Seek help from APPFA team and use available resources.

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS AND BUILD SUPPORT

- Garner leadership buy-in and financial commitments.
- Involve stakeholders early and regularly.
- Form steering committees or dedicated teams for accreditation

NEXT STEPS



Resources

[2027 Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation Manual](#)

[Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation \(APPFA®\) Getting Started Guide](#)

[2025 APPFA Annual Report](#)

[Gap Analysis Tool](#)

[ANCC APFFA Investment Fees](#)

[APPFA Cost-Estimator Tool](#)

[APPFA Customer Satisfaction Survey Results](#)

[Information about the application process](#)

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