

Nursing Advisory Council (NAC)
Inaugural Meeting
November 18, 2025

Welcome, Meeting Objectives, and Introductions	2
Overview of TXHES and the NAC	2
Project Background	3
Project Overview	5
Informing Our Next Phase	5
Who Needs to Be Engaged	5
Understanding Linkage to broader Workforce Challenges	6
Defining and Measuring Success	6
Determining Target Programs	6
Determining the Timeline	7
Learning From Students and Families	7
Understanding Key Elements Needed for a Centralized Service	7
Understanding the Complexities of Existing Systems and How this Can Influence Success.....	7
Understanding and Addressing Potential Administrative and Cost Burden.....	8
Using Data and Understanding Data Challenges	8
Clarifications on Funding	9
Role of the NAC	9
Next Steps.....	10

Welcome, Meeting Objectives, and Introductions

- Hope Morrison, principal consultant and owner of Sophos Strategies, LLC (Sophos), opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. She reminded everyone we were recording the meeting to share with those unable to attend and to help develop thematic notes. Hope requested that meeting participants contact Erin McGaffigan at erin@collectinsight.com if they have any concerns regarding how the recording is going to be used.
- Hope shared a slide of partners' logos demonstrating the diversity of partners who have agreed to join the NAC. She recognized the diverse partners who agreed to help shape this work and how appreciative she and the Texas Health Education Service (TXHES) were for this investment. NAC participants then introduced themselves using the chat feature.
- Hope reviewed the meeting objectives, which were to: 1) welcome the NAC and introduce Sophos Strategies; 2) provide an overview of the NAC; 3) provide background information on the project; 4) inform the project's next steps. The agenda also included dedicated time to answer questions about the NAC, validate or expand upon what the team had learned to date, and provide input into how the NAC will inform the team's work.
- Sophos has been retained by TXHES to facilitate the NAC and development of a feasibility study and implementation plan for a centralized application service for Texas nursing schools. Hope introduced her Sophos colleagues: Henry Perretta, an information technology and operations expert, and Erin McGaffigan, an expert in soliciting and applying feedback from individuals impacted by policy and program decisions.
- Hope reviewed guidelines to keep the meeting productive: Using cameras when possible; making points in a way that ensures everyone feels comfortable that their voice counts; and explaining any acronyms.

Overview of TXHES and the NAC

- Matthew Meeks, Executive Director of the Texas Health Education Service or TXHES, provided a brief overview of TXHES. He reviewed the TXHES mission to bring the state together to support students and their families in their journeys toward health professions.
 - TXHES currently includes 21 advanced degree program members (14 medical, 4 dental, 1 podiatry, 2 veterinary medicine) and 68 undergraduate program members.
 - TXHES provides a range of resources for prospective students and their families, advisors, and the community, including a centralized application service¹, supporting information system, podcasts, educational videos, and a newsroom. TXHES also has pipeline programs, including the Joint Admission Medical Program (JAMP) that works with students to prepare for and be admitted to medical school.
 - TXHES is responsible for developing the NAC and ensuring this NAC informs a feasibility plan and implementation plan for a nursing centralized application service.
- Hope provided an overview of the NAC's role, which is to provide recommendations on a centralized nursing-school application service; inform an implementation plan for deployment of this service, and guide stakeholder communication, system adoption, data infrastructure, and continuous improvement of this process.
- Hope reviewed the NAC's diverse representation, which is important to our success. Representation includes community colleges, health science centers, universities, and varying roles within each of

¹ In the context of a centralized application service, we mean a service that includes a software system as well as administrative and operations staff supporting nursing school applicants and nursing programs.

those institutions. It also includes student representation, legislative and state liaisons, and technology partners.

- Hope recognized that the NAC may have a long-term role in the implementation of a centralized service, but Sophos' work is focused on the period between now and the end of February 2026. During this time, Sophos will bring the NAC together a total of three times: today, once in January, and once in February. NAC participants also may be asked to join ad hoc meetings to inform our work during this period.
- NAC participants will contribute to discussions, data collection strategies, and recommendations on how a centralized service could get implemented. NAC participants will also have opportunities to network with their peers across the state while shaping a more effective and equitable admissions ecosystem to advance the nursing workforce.
- The group had no questions about the role of the NAC at this time.

Project Background

HB 2851 and the Texas Healthcare Workforce Taskforce

- HB 2851 was authored by State Representatives Donna Howard and Vincent Perez and sponsored in the Senate by State Senator Lois Kolkhorst. It passed in May 2025 without funding. HB 2851 requires a consolidated application service for nursing schools. It also directs TXHES to appoint an advisory board to develop recommendations and implementation plan for including nursing school applications in its centralized application service.
- Victoria Ford, President and CEO of Texas Healthcare Bioscience Institute, shared information on the 2023-2024 Healthcare Workforce Taskforce and the formal report and recommendations that resulted from their work. Victoria was appointed by the Governor to chair the Task Force, which included about 12 members plus an additional 60- 70 people on an advisory committee. The task force conducted public meetings, presentations, workshops, focus groups and other outreach to gather public input, which led to a series of 18 comprehensive recommendations to address the state's healthcare workforce shortage.
- Victoria reported that the number one thing she heard as Task Force Chair was that Texas turns down thousands of qualified nursing candidates from nursing schools every year and that number keeps increasing. However, the Task Force learned that there is no reliable way to determine how many qualified candidates are applying or being rejected. The goal of the Task Force's Recommendation #8 was to implement a centralized application service for nursing school applications that will provide reliable data that can be used to develop effective policies and programs to address Texas' nursing workforce shortages.

Understanding Vacant Seat Data

- Maya Jukic, Professor at Civic School of Nursing, presented data on the Texas nursing shortage which was compiled through a study funded by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. This study found the nursing shortage is a cyclical and complex phenomenon both nationally and in Texas. The current shortage is estimated at about 44,000 registered nurses. In 2036, the shortage is projected to grow to 56,000.
- Maya noted that there are many supply and demand factors that affect the shortage of registered nurses (RNs), but the focus of the NAC is the role of nursing education programs in optimizing RN production in Texas. Based on publicly available data, Texas has about 5,000 vacant pre-licensure seats across 112 programs. Of these, about 1,000 are Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) and 4,000 are Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN).

- No systems nationally or in Texas are able to count unique individuals who apply to Texas nursing programs. Instead, we are only able to count the applications, which overestimates the actual number of applicants. It will be important to design a service that provides transparency to students and their families around where vacant seats exist and other data they can use to inform decisions about where to apply, such as graduation rates, National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) pass rates, and program costs.
- A national service known as NursingCAS is used by 33 Texas nursing programs. It will be important to learn from this approach to provide a user-friendly strategy for applicants and for schools to better identify vacancies and eliminate inefficiencies at the state level to fill vacancies.

Review of Recent Survey Data

- Hope reviewed findings from two surveys conducted this year to gain a better understanding of nursing programs' needs so the NAC could validate and/or expand upon this learning.
- The Texas Nursing Program Admissions Survey was disseminated in the spring of 2025. It asked about interest, readiness, and concerns related to a centralized nursing application service.
 - Respondents represented more than 40 nursing programs across Texas.
 - They noted benefits to a centralized service, including the opportunity to fill unfilled seats and a more informed applicant pool.
 - They reported concerns around student affordability and the importance of allowing flexible admissions criteria to ensure institution autonomy.
 - They noted the need for robust technical support and representation from all types of institutions to inform the process.
- The second survey was disseminated by TXHES in October 2025. It asked how TXHES can best partner with schools and how to design a service to anticipate and close workforce gaps.
 - Respondents raised cost and fee concerns and some highlighted the importance of making the service free for students.
 - They want to ensure representation and inclusion of groups that might be left behind in this process, especially community colleges.
 - They indicated the importance of consistent, accessible communication and updates such as through newsletters, emails, and campus visits.
 - Some expressed the need to avoid duplication with existing systems, such as NursingCAS.
 - Some respondents shared that they don't have an issue filling seats but that they have faculty and clinical space constraints.
 - They indicated the importance of tracking where seats are unfilled and of sharing this information with students so they can make informed decisions. Respondents also noted the importance of identifying admission rate differences across regions (e.g., which regions are turning students away and which are not). Respondents recognized the importance of integrating this work with existing systems, since some already collect this data.
 - The most common response to a question on what we should accomplish within 10 years was to fill all seats in the state and ensure all qualified applicants get into a nursing program. Second most common was ensuring a more unified, streamlined application process.
 - Most respondents want to be engaged in the process of developing a new system via small groups like focus groups and small meetings. Others indicated that one-on-one conversations and surveys would be helpful.
- NAC participants generally agreed that the survey results reflect their experience and perspectives.

Project Overview

- Hope reviewed the approach to conducting the feasibility study to assess the viability, preferred design, and operational requirements of a centralized application service. This feasibility study will then be used to inform development of recommendations and an implementation plan to provide a road map for providing the centralized application service.
- Sophos will work on these products now through the end of February. The goal is for TXHES to publish the recommendations and implementation plan by March.
- The feasibility study will have five domains for analysis: technical, operational, stakeholder, governance, and financial.
- Sophos will use a range of data collection methods to inform this work, such as interviews, focus groups, and other structured methods. Sophos will be building on input provided in the two 2025 surveys to inform how we engage partners. Sophos will facilitate bi-directional information exchange and synthesize the range of perspectives within deliverables.
- Sophos will implement two rounds of data collection between now and January. The NAC will meet again in January and February to review findings and provide additional feedback to inform the recommendations and the implementation plan.

Informing Our Next Phase

The following notes highlight conversations, unmet needs, and recommendations for next steps as described throughout the November 18th meeting.

Who Needs to Be Engaged

NAC participants discussed who else needs to be included in this process to inform the feasibility plan and implementation plan. The following stakeholders were identified.

Colleges and Universities with Nursing Programs (there are more than 112 nursing programs in Texas)

- Assistant/Associate Deans and leaders for Student Services and Student Affairs (those who are involved in the application and admission process) (external and internal of schools of nursing) who directly contact and/or recruit students
- Nursing Deans and Directors of Nursing programs
- Registrar leadership
- Marketing and admissions staff who manage the processes and systems within schools
- Technology staff who transfer transcripts to universities and community colleges
- Independent colleges and universities
- Schools from diverse geographic locations
- Schools with internal or 'home grown' admissions processes
- Schools that have both program and university level admission processes
- Schools that have a difficult time filling seats
- Schools that do not have a difficult time filling seats

Students and Parents

- Applying to nursing schools
- Have recently gone through the application process
- At various points in their nursing school paths (e.g., freshman, transfer students, dual degrees)

- Out of state

High Schools

- High school counselors
- Independent school district (ISD) dual-credit high schools, pipelines, and summer camps

Understanding Linkage to broader Workforce Challenges

NAC participants had discussions about the broader workforce challenges that exist and their relationship to this project. The following points were made during this discussion:

- It will take more faculty for many programs to be able to fill more seats
- Scarce faculty means programs may need to work across institutions such as having faculty teach collaboratively across universities or having courses that apply to two degrees.
- Programs need to create rational models for clinical placement, which includes nursing homes and settings that faculty are not always positive about.
- There are curricular issues to address, such as how many hours are needed to produce a practice ready nurse.
- Refining the application service doesn't solve these issues, but there are other efforts in place to try and address the faculty and clinical obstacles that exist.
- Learning how many people are applying and not getting admitted to nursing schools will support development of a wide range of policies that would support workforce development. For example, the data may help identify where there is an intersection between unfilled seats and the faculty and clinical placement obstacles.

Defining and Measuring Success

Throughout the conversations, NAC participants discussed defining and measuring success. For instance:

- How do we define success? How will it be measured?
- What will be our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring success?
- What is our common goal?
- How do we ensure our individual programs stay robust while at the same time work together to address workforce shortages at the state level through a centralized application service?
- How do we come to agreement on specific and intentional operational definitions that make this possible?
- How can we make the solution intuitive for students (e.g., use of an AI agent), but also allow it to be leveraged by universities to inform strategic planning and growth (e.g., predict needed FTEs)
- We could produce quality report cards for nursing programs to inform decision making, such as average GPAs, average entrance exam scores, 5 yrs of NCLEX pass rates, and percentage of students who graduate on time.

Determining Target Programs

To determine the appropriate programs to target in each phase of the implementation plan (there are over 100 programs in Texas), NAC participants want to consider:

- Which programs would we include first and which would be phased in later (e.g., LVN, RN to BSN, BSN or second degree, ADN)?
- Are we only focusing on undergraduates, including second degree bachelor programs?

- Are we focusing on all undergraduate pathways to become a nurse or are we considering only BSN and ADN pathways?
- Who do we need to get buy-in from as part of this process and how are we doing that?

Determining the Timeline

NAC participants want to know the intended timeline to create a centralized application service:

- What can we realistically do within two years, four years, etc?
- How would this project logically progress (e.g., what do the phases look like)?
- How long would a project like this realistically take?

Learning From Students and Families

NAC participants would like to know the application behavior of students and families and how this centralized application service would impact students and their families:

- How do students and families make decisions during the application process, including what data they use to make decisions and whether or not they know where vacancies exist?
- What are the application steps and hurdles for students and how does this differ across programs and for students who need to be admitted to both a university and a nursing program?
- How do these application steps and hurdles impact student decisions on where and when to apply, including transfer students, students with a bachelor's degree seeking a second degree, and students seeking dual degrees?
- How do we ensure the centralized application service supports entry of students who live outside of Texas as well as ensure we do not make it more attractive for Texas students to go to other states?

Understanding Key Elements Needed for a Centralized Service

NAC participants want to understand what a centralized service would look like:

- What is on the 'front page' of a system supporting the centralized system?
- What do schools need on the back end, from a technology standpoint, to make this feasible?
- What do we need to know about the front page and back end elements and then what do we need to decide to make both work while keeping costs down?
- What is our definition of qualified applicant? We publish minimum GPA on our websites, but virtually no students get in at that minimum. How do we ensure transparency on minimum requirements for students?
- How do we offer transparency and the choice to applicants so they can see where the seats are available and make informed choices (e.g., do they want to wait for a program for another two years or go somewhere else with strong NCLEX pass rates and graduation rates)?

Understanding the Complexities of Existing Systems and How this Can Influence Success

NAC participants discussed the complexities of programs and systems and how these complexities must be considered when designing a centralized application system.

Schools with Varying Systems in Place

- We are a mix of community colleges, universities, undergraduate, and graduate programs. How do we create a centralized application system that can be responsive to home grown, internal application systems as well as more formal, multi-program systems already in place?

- What happens for community colleges not already participating in any centralized application system?
- What happens when university and nursing program admission processes and timelines do not align?

Those Using NursingCAS

- Approximately 24 schools already use NursingCAS. What are the implications for these schools?
- What happens for universities that are using NursingCAS for accelerated programs, but not for their broader, more traditional university systems?
- Will Texas be partnering with NursingCAS to implement a Texas-specific application system? (Matthew reported that some high-level discussions have been initiated with Liaison, the company that runs NursingCAS, to understand the potential for a partnership but that the NAC will assume an important role in informing design of any system supporting a centralized application service.)
- NAC participants expressed interest in ongoing transparency and communication on whether we can move forward with an NCAS approach.

Understanding and Addressing Potential Administrative and Cost Burden

NAC participants want to know the costs and burdens associated with a new centralized application service:

- What are the barriers to accomplishing this centralized service, how complex are these barriers, and what do we need to overcome them?
- What would be the burden on Student Affairs offices that may need to manage multiple parallel systems?
- What would be schools' administrative burden and costs (e.g., manual download of transcripts)?
- What will the downstream impacts of this work be, such as on university strategy, processes, workflows, and faculty planning?
- What is the benefit of joining this process for schools that do not have seat vacancies, rather students willing to delay their schooling by entering through a different degree or program?
- How does this impact students and families (process, burden, opportunities, and costs)?

Using Data and Understanding Data Challenges

NAC participants are concerned that existing data is weak, limiting ability to make informed decisions. They believe we should address this as we design a centralized application service.

Use of Existing Data

- We need to understand the origins and accuracy of Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Data, including Nursing Education Programs Information System (NEPIS).
- Does the data we have now (e.g., Qualified Applicants Not Admitted) present an accurate presentation of applicants per seat?
- Current Texas supply and demand estimates use the HRSA national supply and demand model, but there are wide variations across the nation.
- We have raw data from the 112 pre-licensure programs that show individual school applications, admissions, and enrollments from the NEPA survey.
- We run nursing applicant data through National Student Clearinghouse. It is not a perfect process, but might give us some insight.

Questions that Need to Be Answered

- We need a clear understanding of what data and analytics a centralized system would provide. How success will be measured will depend on the system selected (i.e., NursingCAS or other options).
- What types of data will provide the most accurate picture of seat vacancies and applicants not admitted while recognizing the impact of fees and other factors that may be influencing the number of applicants?
- Who and how many people are getting rejected at the state level? Some of this data may be available through existing systems although we can only count applications, not individual applicants.
- How many of those applying to our programs are Texas residents?

Informing Transparency and Ongoing Decisions

- We need to ensure this is an iterative process driven by data and that we provide routine, transparent updates based on data and then shift our strategies as new learning arises. Confidence and trust will come with competency. Competency comes with strong data and communication.
- Once we know we have sound data, we can revisit the scope of the problem and our solutions.

Clarifications on Funding

NAC participants wanted to better understand funding options for the centralized application service:

- What are the funding options for a centralized application service?
- Who will be responsible for funding the various phases, including developing, managing, and sustaining the service?
- What will be the financial implications on students, and how do we ensure that we do not put financial roadblocks in front of students?
- What type of public funding should we be seeking, and what do legislators need to know in order to support allocation of funding for a centralized service?

Role of the NAC

NAC participants discussed how they could help in the next phase of data collection. Ideas included:

- Provide guidance on where and how to reach people (e.g., student affairs and students in each university).
- Reach out to target groups, including pre-nursing students, nursing students, high schools, and college and university staff.
- Provide input on questions seeking feedback (e.g., for focus groups or surveys).

NAC participants provided recommendations for communication channels to conduct outreach to target groups:

- Registrar leadership and Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (TACRAO)
- Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (ICUT)
- Texas Association of College Admission Counseling (TACAC)
- Texas Nurses Association
- Texas Organization of Baccalaureate Nursing Educators (TOBGNE)
- Texas Deans and Directors of Professional Nursing Programs (TADDPNP)

Next Steps

- NAC participants were asked to complete a meeting survey to inform future meetings and methods for this project.
- NAC participants were informed that there will be a shared working space (e.g., NAC Resource Hub) where all meeting materials and working products will be shared with NAC members. Sophos will share more information on how to access this Resource Hub soon.