

Implementation Plan for a Texas Centralized Nursing School Application Service

Prepared for Texas Health Education Service

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Executive Summary

House Bill 2851 directed the Texas Health Education Service (TXHES) to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a statewide, centralized application system (CAS) for nursing programs. The feasibility study, conducted by Texas consulting group Sophos Strategies between October 2025-February 2026, confirmed that a common platform can streamline the application process and improve transparency for applicants, support more efficient admissions operations, and strengthen Texas' ability to plan for nursing workforce needs. The study also identified important differences among programs, resource constraints, and operational realities that require a careful and deliberate approach to implementation.

This implementation plan provides a structured, risk-managed pathway for moving from feasibility to execution through a Texas-customized and Texas-branded version (TexNCAS) of Liaison's CAS technology. The same technology underlies NursingCAS, the largest centralized nursing school application service in the nation, delivered by Liaison in partnership with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). Liaison's CAS platform currently supports hundreds of nursing programs nationwide, providing a tested foundation on which Texas can build.

The implementation plan is designed to be operationally practical, financially responsible, and responsive to stakeholder input while maintaining clear state authority over policy and participation decisions.

Phased Implementation Based on Nursing Program Readiness. The approach does not assume a single statewide go-live. Instead, it emphasizes phased adoption based on readiness validation. Programs will participate as they demonstrate preparedness, supported by defined onboarding processes, training resources, and technical assistance scaled to institutional circumstances. This allows TXHES to build experience, validate support models, and incorporate lessons learned before expanding participation.

Institutional Control of Admissions Decisions. Nursing programs retain full authority over admissions standards, selection processes, and academic policies. TexNCAS provides the infrastructure to collect applicant information; it does not replace institutional control. Configuration tools, role permissions, and workflow design ensure statewide coordination while preserving the program-level variation required for accreditation, mission commitments, and educational pathways.

TXHES-Led Governance and Vendor Oversight. TXHES maintains responsibility for governance, vendor oversight, fiscal stewardship, and system sustainability. The vendor supplies and operates the technical platform and associated services under TXHES direction, but decisions regarding eligibility requirements, data access, participation expectations, and policy interpretation remain with the state. Where enhancements or changes are requested, structured governance and continuous quality improvement pathways determine priorities, sequencing, and funding considerations.

Meaningful Stakeholder Input into Implementation and Ongoing Improvement. Stakeholder engagement has shaped every element of this plan. Input from the Nursing Advisory Committee established under HB 2851, stakeholder roundtable sessions, student and institutional surveys, and other feedback consistently highlighted the need to minimize disruption, protect institutional autonomy, maintain affordability for applicants, and avoid premature mandates. These themes are

reflected in the plan's emphasis on voluntary readiness determination, phased participation waves, advisory mechanisms, and explicit mitigation strategies. The implementation framework also establishes ongoing structures through which participating programs and students will continue to inform refinements over time.

Risk Management and Readiness Safeguards. Risk management is embedded throughout the approach. Readiness assessments ensure programs do not enter the system before they can succeed. Training and support resources remain available beyond launch. Financial exposure is monitored as participation grows, and governance mechanisms provide pathways to evaluate emerging issues and make adjustments when warranted. TXHES retains the ability to adjust pacing if readiness or performance indicators signal the need.

Financial Sustainability and Exposure Management. Because final vendor terms remain under negotiation, precise costs cannot yet be stated. However, modeling based on anticipated participation levels and application volumes provides TXHES with a reasonable estimate of the scale and timing of potential exposure.

Under conservative participation assumptions and the terms currently under discussion as of mid-February 2026, TXHES could be required to manage a temporary funding gap in the approximate range of \$450,000 to \$600,000. Under conservative assumptions in the second year of operations, the approximate funding gap is \$50K to \$150K if growth is slower than anticipated. However, under moderate participation scenarios, year-three operations could generate a positive balance in the range of \$100,000 to \$250,000. As additional institutions join TexNCAS, the probability and magnitude of negative operating positions are expected to decline.

This trajectory is typical for shared service platforms in which core capability must exist before full participation is realized. TXHES will refine projections as commercial terms are finalized and participation levels become clearer.

A Balanced, Sustainable Framework for Delivering State and Stakeholder Value. TexNCAS is designed to begin delivering benefits in the near-term while supporting improvement over time. The governance, readiness, and continuous quality processes described in this plan create a stable foundation that enables successful launch as well as ongoing adaptation to changing needs. Participating programs and students will have defined avenues to inform priorities, while TXHES retains responsibility for balancing those perspectives with state objectives, fiscal stewardship, and long-term sustainability.

This model advances statewide visibility into the nursing education pipeline, enhancing Texas' ability to fill available seats, and improves access, usability, and transparency for applicants while recognizing the complex, varied Texas nursing school admissions landscape. It equips TXHES with the tools necessary to manage vendor performance, institutional readiness, and long-term sustainability.

Taken together, the feasibility findings and this implementation framework provide Texas with a practical path forward: deliberate, inclusive, and designed to strengthen efforts to grow the future nursing workforce.

1. Implementation Plan Purpose and Context

This implementation plan describes a phased, risk-managed approach for statewide adoption of a Texas Nursing Centralized Application System (TexNCAS) using a Texas-customized version of Liaison’s centralized application system (CAS) technology. The plan is intended to be sufficiently detailed to guide early execution while remaining flexible enough to incorporate additional stakeholder input and continuous operational learning over time.

The implementation approach preserves TXHES’s authority over governance, policy, and program participation decisions while also incorporating:

- Recommendations and feedback from the HB 2851-mandated advisory committee.
- Other stakeholder feedback collected through interviews and survey instruments.
- Feasibility analyses conducted across governance, stakeholder readiness, technical, operational, and financial domains.
- Vendor-provided implementation experience and sequencing considerations based on comparable multi-program deployments.
- The objectives of HB 2851 and related workforce recommendations, including equitable access, scalability, and sustainability.

To translate these inputs into action, this plan establishes clear roles and responsibilities, structured readiness safeguards, phased onboarding pathways, coordinated training and technical assistance, financial stewardship mechanisms, and a formal process for continuous quality improvement. Together, these elements are designed to reduce implementation risk while allowing the system to mature responsibly over time.

The plan emphasizes gradual adoption, strong governance, and continuous improvement rather than a single statewide “go-live.” Participation timing will therefore vary across institutions based on readiness and local conditions, with the goal of supporting successful transitions rather than forcing premature implementation.

2. Implementation Design Principles

Stakeholder input consistently emphasized the importance of minimizing disruption to nursing programs, preserving program-level autonomy, and avoiding a one-size-fits-all roll-out. This implementation approach reflects those priorities while maintaining TXHES responsibility for achieving statewide objectives. In response, the plan is grounded in the following principles:

- **Stakeholder-informed design and implementation**, with structured opportunities for institutional and student input.
- **Phased adoption** to allow learning, risk mitigation, and refinement before full statewide deployment.
- **Readiness-based participation**, recognizing variation in program size, staffing, admissions processes, and technical capacity.
- Clear and accountable **separation of roles** among TXHES, nursing programs, and the vendor.
- **Standardization where it adds value, combined with program-specific configuration** where required for accreditation and admissions needs.

- **Continuous quality improvement** supported by formal mechanisms for intake, prioritization, and adjustment.

These principles respond directly to advisory committee concerns about prior statewide implementations that advanced faster than institutional readiness or lacked durable engagement structures.

3. Roles and Responsibilities During Implementation

Clear delineation of responsibilities was a recurring stakeholder priority. Accordingly, the implementation approach assigns enduring and non-overlapping roles among TXHES, participating institutions, and the vendor, as summarized below.

Table 3. Roles and Responsibilities

| TXHES | Nursing Programs | Vendor |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program ownership, design, and governance, with input from advisory group • Vendor oversight and contract management • Coordination of readiness assessments and phased rollout • Stakeholder engagement and communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program-specific configuration • Internal process alignment and staff training • Applicant advising and admissions decision-making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform configuration and maintenance • Training and technical support • Data security and reporting capabilities |

This allocation of responsibilities applies across all phases of implementation and is reinforced through the governance, readiness, training, and continuous improvement structures described in subsequent sections.

4. Governance Considerations

4.1 Purpose and Role of TexNCAS Governance

Successful implementation of TexNCAS requires more than technology deployment. It requires a governance structure that enables TXHES to effectively exercise its statutory authority, maintain institutional trust, and translate statewide objectives into repeatable operational practices. The feasibility analysis demonstrated that Option 1 is viable because it allows TXHES to centralize application intake while preserving institutional control over admissions decisions and remaining within existing legal and accreditation frameworks. Implementation governance is the mechanism through which those feasibility conditions are maintained.

The governance approach described here is designed to accomplish four concurrent objectives:

1. Ensure TXHES remains responsible for the CAS’ fulfillment of legislative and state policy objectives such as improving availability of nursing education pipeline data, maximizing utilization of program capacity, streamlining the applicant experience, and equipping

applicants with information on program quality to support application and enrollment decisions.

2. Enable TXHES to act decisively where statewide consistency is required, including participation expectations, data stewardship standards, and reporting integrity.
3. Explicitly protect the authority that institutions retain over admissions criteria and applicant evaluation and selection.
4. Provide meaningful and ongoing pathways for nursing programs to inform how the system is configured, supported, and improved over time.

These objectives are reinforced through the readiness, configuration, and continuous improvement mechanisms described elsewhere in this plan. Collectively, these four objectives inform the formalized CAS governance structure described below, making it possible to run a centralized service effectively in a decentralized higher education environment while achieving legislative and state policy goals.

4.2 Governance Structure and Advisory Oversight

The governance model for TexNCAS places TXHES in the role of system owner with oversight authority. This means that TXHES is responsible for contract management with the vendor, policy development, data governance, and accountability for the platform's alignment with legislative intent.

Informed by the work of the Nursing Advisory Committee initiated for this project, TXHES will appoint an advisory group that will provide ongoing input to TXHES on system design, configuration decisions, enhancement priorities, and operational policies. The current Nursing Advisory Committee established under HB 2851 is scheduled to sunset in September 2027. Because TexNCAS will continue to operate and evolve beyond that date, TXHES will establish a successor governance mechanism that preserves continuity of advisory input. The implementation plan anticipates that the transition from the current advisory committee to a longer-term advisory structure will be an explicit governance activity during Phase 1, informed by engagement models such as the TMSAS advisory committee.

Stakeholders have consistently emphasized that the TexNCAS advisory body should include representation from diverse institution types, including community colleges, public universities, health-related institutions, and private schools, as well as geographic regions and professional bodies such as the Texas Board of Nursing. Participants have also stressed that governance should incorporate the applicant voice as well as operational expertise from frontline admissions and registrar staff who manage applications daily, program administrators, and IT specialists. This ensures that the people closest to the work have a meaningful voice in how the system evolves.

4.3 Statutory Authority and Institutional Autonomy

Texas nursing programs operate within multiple overlapping governance frameworks, including state statute and regulation, accreditation standards administered by bodies such as the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, and institutional governance policies set by university systems, boards of regents, and local governing bodies. House Bill 2851 directs TXHES to include nursing programs within a centralized application service, but it does not alter institutions' existing statutory authority over admissions decisions and student eligibility determinations, nor does it modify their responsibilities under Board of Nursing or accreditation requirements. As a result, TexNCAS

governance must operate inside a dual framework: centralized administration of intake and data on one hand, and institutional sovereignty over admissions judgment on the other.

Texas already operates a centralized application system successfully under this type of dual framework through TMSAS. That experience demonstrates that multi-institution participation in a common platform can coexist with varied admissions policies, provided governance boundaries are clear and consistently honored. TexNCAS will adopt this same philosophy. Participation agreements, governance charters, and operating procedures will explicitly affirm that while application submission and certain elements of process standardization are centralized under TXHES authority, admissions decisions remain with each nursing program.

Implementation will require TXHES to make a series of determinations that must be uniform across participating programs in order for the system to function as a statewide service. These include definitions of required data elements, baseline application cycle structures, minimum reporting expectations, security standards, and compliance with statewide audit requirements. Because these functions are inherent to operating a centralized application service, they fall squarely within TXHES's responsibility.

However, TXHES authority does not extend to control over how institutions evaluate, rank, admit, or deny applicants. Instead, TXHES establishes the infrastructure through which the information required to make those decisions is collected. This distinction is fundamental and will be embedded in governance documentation from the outset.

Throughout the feasibility study's stakeholder engagement process, institutions consistently emphasized the need for explicit reassurance that participation in a centralized platform would not erode admissions independence. Implementation governance therefore begins by codifying what remains unchanged. Institutions will continue to define prerequisite structures, holistic review practices, committee processes, and selection methodologies. They will retain responsibility for compliance with accreditation bodies such as ACEN and CCNE and for adherence to Texas Board of Nursing requirements. Nothing in TexNCAS governance substitutes TXHES judgment for institutional judgment in these areas.

4.4 Role of the CAS Vendor in Governance

The CAS vendor provides and maintains the technical environment in which Texas policy is executed. Under contract with TXHES, the vendor is responsible for hosting the platform, ensuring system security and availability, delivering applicant and institutional support services as defined in the agreement, implementing approved configurations, and supplying operational data necessary for oversight and continuous improvement.

The vendor does not determine admissions standards, data-sharing rules, or participation requirements. Those decisions are made by TXHES and operationalized through configuration, permissions, and workflow structures directed by TXHES.

At the same time, vendor partnership introduces a practical reality acknowledged in the feasibility findings: not every requested enhancement can be implemented immediately or independently. The governance framework therefore establishes structured pathways for prioritization, communication, and escalation so institutions understand which adjustments fall within Texas-controlled configuration authority and which must proceed through coordinated processes to enter the vendor's development and enhancement lifecycle. TXHES remains responsible for

managing vendor performance, setting priorities, and determining when proposed changes advance.

4.5 Governance Participation by Program Operations Staff

Stakeholders were clear that governance must extend beyond policy leadership and include nursing program staff who are involved in daily admissions work. Governance will therefore incorporate structured advisory participation from institutions of different sizes, operating different types of nursing programs, located in a variety of geographic areas. These representatives will inform decisions regarding configuration, data definitions, applicant communications, and training approaches.

Their role cannot be symbolic. Because TexNCAS will influence how applications are received, verified, and reviewed, operational credibility is essential to successful adoption. Governance structures will formalize how this expertise is incorporated into recommendations while maintaining TXHES accountability for final determinations.

4.6 Data Ownership, Access, and Stewardship

Data governance emerged as one of the most sensitive topics in stakeholder engagement discussions. Institutions need assurance that applicant information will not be used in ways that distort competition, disadvantage nursing programs, or violate privacy. Implementation governance will address this through a combination of contractual protections, formal policy statements, and auditable system controls.

TXHES retains governance authority over data access policies, role-based access definitions, and the rules governing how applicant data may be shared with participating programs. The vendor's platform supports these policies through configurable access controls, audit capabilities, and system-enforced permissions, but the vendor does not set data policy. Liaison's contractual obligations include restrictions on the use and disclosure of applicant data, requirements that data not be shared with third parties without TXHES's written consent, and obligations to deactivate access for terminated users promptly.

TXHES will develop a data stewardship framework, in consultation with the advisory group, that defines what data is collected, who may access specific types of data, for what purposes, and under what conditions. Prohibited uses will be stated clearly. Audit capabilities within the platform will allow TXHES to monitor adherence and respond to concerns. This framework will be codified as part of the governance policies established before Phase 1 go-live and refined as the system scales. Clear, enforceable data governance is essential not only for legal compliance but for building and maintaining institutional trust in the system.

4.7 Formal Agreements with Participating Nursing Programs

Each nursing program that participates in TexNCAS will do so under a formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding, between the program's institution and TXHES. This will follow the current TMDSAS governance model. These agreements will define the terms of participation, including data sharing obligations, configuration responsibilities, compliance with platform policies, and the process for joining or withdrawing from the system. Execution of agreements will be a prerequisite to phase participation.

Formal agreements serve two governance purposes. First, they establish a clear and enforceable relationship between TXHES and each participating institution, providing both parties with defined

expectations and recourse if those expectations are not met. Second, they ensure that institutional participation is grounded in the institution's own governance processes, since most universities and college systems require internal approval before entering into external agreements that affect admissions operations or data sharing. The timeline for executing these agreements will be incorporated into the readiness criteria for each implementation phase.

4.8 Change Management

As identified in the feasibility analysis, the most complex governance dimension under Option 1 involves managing change in a vendor-supported environment. Institutions must be able to see how requests move from suggestion to decision, how priorities are determined, and when implementation can be expected.

To meet this need, TXHES will maintain a structured change governance process that differentiates between adjustments achievable through configuration and those requiring vendor development. Requests will be cataloged, evaluated for statewide relevance, and prioritized through established governance channels. Status updates will be communicated on a regular cadence so that institutions understand progress and constraints. This approach does not eliminate dependency, but it makes dependency governable.

4.9 Decision Rights and Dispute Resolution

A recurring theme in stakeholder feedback was the need for clarity about who has the authority to make decisions about the system and how disagreements will be resolved. In a statewide platform serving programs with different sizes, missions, and admissions models, conflicting priorities are inevitable. A program may request a configuration change that benefits its workflow but creates complexity for others. An enhancement that serves large university programs may not align with the needs of community colleges.

The governance framework will define decision rights at multiple levels: platform-wide policy decisions made by TXHES with advisory input, program-specific configuration decisions made collaboratively between programs and TXHES, and vendor-managed technical decisions governed by the contract and service level agreements. Change control mechanisms will establish how proposed modifications to the system are evaluated, prioritized, tested, and communicated. The draft contract with Liaison includes defined processes for requested modifications, notice periods for platform upgrades, and testing windows before changes take effect.

The vendor agreement must provide for good-faith negotiation of any disputes between TXHES and the vendor before formal proceedings. For institutional disputes, TXHES will serve as the arbiter, with input from the advisory body. The goal is to establish governance processes that are transparent, predictable, and perceived as fair by participants, so that disagreements can be resolved without undermining trust in the system.

4.10 Transparency, Accountability, and Communication

As consistently emphasized by stakeholders, trust in TexNCAS depends on transparency in how the system is governed, how decisions are made, and how performance is communicated. This extends beyond data access to include visibility into configuration choices, enhancement priorities, vendor performance, fee policies, and the criteria used to evaluate system success.

Transparency, accountability, and communication are addressed through several mechanisms:

- Regular **advisory committee** meetings with published agendas and outcomes

- A **workgroup structure** with institutional representatives to identify and develop solutions to risks, challenges, and needed changes.
- Periodic (e.g., quarterly, annual) **reporting on system performance**.
- Structured processes for **soliciting and responding to nursing program and applicant feedback**.
- Clear **communication about planned changes** to the platform before they take effect.

Transparency will be sustained through formal governance documentation, publication of decisions, and routine communication with participating nursing programs. Institutions will be able to trace how determinations were reached and what considerations informed them. Clear articulation of roles (what is controlled by TXHES versus institutions, where the vendor operates) will be central to maintaining credibility. Vendor accountability is supported through contractual service level commitments, defined performance monitoring, and escalation pathways for unresolved issues.

4.11 Ongoing Governance

Governance is not a one-time design exercise. It is an ongoing practice that must evolve as TexNCAS scales from pilot to statewide operation, ensuring governance capacity keeps pace with program growth. The implementation plan treats governance as a standing workstream, with dedicated attention during each phase to refining structures, codifying policies, and ensuring that the advisory body and participating nursing programs have meaningful input into the system's direction.

During early phases, governance activity will focus heavily on defining standards, validating workflows, developing mitigation strategies for concerns and risks raised by stakeholders, and addressing unanticipated issues.

As participation expands and practices stabilize, emphasis will shift toward enhancement management, performance monitoring, and long-term sustainability. Governance structures are therefore expected to mature alongside the system, becoming more routine but no less essential.

5. Stakeholder Considerations

5.1 Role of Stakeholders in Implementation

Stakeholder engagement does not conclude with completion of the feasibility phase. As TexNCAS moves from evaluation to execution, the nature of participation evolves from identifying possibilities and risks to supporting practical, informed implementation. Institutions, applicants, and partner organizations will continue to play an important advisory role by helping TXHES understand operational realities, emerging challenges, and opportunities for refinement.

The implementation model therefore establishes durable, structured avenues through which participating programs, programs not yet participating, and applicants can provide perspective while preserving TXHES authority for final decisions. Engagement during this stage is intended to improve execution quality, strengthen transparency, and support adoption across diverse institutional environments.

This approach reflects themes raised consistently during stakeholder outreach: programs want to remain informed, to have practical input into how the system works in day-to-day operations, and to

understand how their feedback will influence future improvements. The structures described below translate those expectations into a repeatable implementation partnership.

5.2 Advisory Group

5.2.1 Advisory Group Purpose

TXHES will convene and chair a TexNCAS advisory group to guide governance design, platform configuration, pilot sequencing, implementation oversight, and ongoing continuous quality improvement. TXHES will establish an advisory group charter and meeting structure for the advisory group as well as an onboarding process that ensures all advisory group members understand the advisory group purpose, benefits, time investment, support available, and intended impact.

5.2.1 Proposed Advisory Group Composition

TXHES will issue a public call for nominations and solicit recommendations from institutions, professional associations, and statewide organizations. Appointments will ensure geographic diversity, representation across institution types, and operational expertise.

Proposed advisory group composition includes the following, recognizing that some individuals may fit more than one representation category:

- Community College Nursing Programs (3)
- Public University Nursing Programs (3)
- Private/Independent Nursing Programs (2)
- Admissions Leadership (2)
- Student Services/Advising (1)
- Registrar/Enrollment Management (1)
- Institutional Data Expert (1)
- IT/Security Representative (1)
- Financial Services/Financial Aid (1)
- Program Director Representative (1)
- Student/Recent Graduate Representative (2)
- Workforce/Employer Representative (1)

5.2.3 Meeting Cadence and Key Activities

The advisory group will meet monthly during the first six months or more frequently as needed. During development and pilot phases, meetings may transition to quarterly, with additional sessions scheduled to support pilot implementation and quality improvement. TXHES will provide the advisory group with a virtual space for meetings and information sharing, including a place to access meeting agendas, meeting notes, timelines, interim products, and final products.

Below is a suggested timeline and activities for the advisory group.

Table 5.2.3 Suggested Timeline and Activities for Advisory Group

| Phase | Timeframe | Key Activities |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Kick Off, Design, Configuration and Phase 1 Launch | Spring-Fall 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory group establishment and meetings • Readiness assessment • Phase 1 programs identified • Monthly meetings and vendor collaboration • Technical specifications finalized and TexNCAS platform configured • Phase 1 programs configure systems • Training • Testing, signoff, and Phase 1 launch |
| Phase 2 | Fall 2026 – Fall 2027 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing advisory group work • Incorporate feedback and CQI input from Phase 1 • Phase 2 programs identified • Modifications/enhancements to technical specifications finalized and TexNCAS platform configured • Phase 2 programs configure systems • Training • Testing, signoff, and Phase 2 launch |
| Phase 3 | Fall 2027 – Fall 2028 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing advisory group work • Incorporate feedback and CQI input from Phase 2 • Phase 3 programs identified • Modifications/enhancements to technical specifications finalized and TexNCAS platform configured • Phase 3 programs configure systems • Training • Testing, signoff, and Phase 3 launch |
| CQI and Expansion | Post-Fall 2028 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue tracking • Performance monitoring |

5.2.4 Workgroups

TXHES will establish topic-specific workgroups organized by user type and/or implementation focus area as needed to support the advisory group. During the design phase, workgroups will collaborate with TXHES and the vendor at frequent intervals to inform system configuration, portal design, reporting definitions, and workflow alignment. Sample topics for workgroups may include:

- Readiness review design and protocol
- Pilot cohort design and protocol
- Vendor design sessions
- Configuration review and portal mock-up feedback
- Reporting dashboard review
- Usability testing of applicant-facing tools
- Operational workflow simulations.

5.3 Mechanisms for Participation

Stakeholder participation during implementation will occur through a combination of the advisory group and focused workgroups. Participating nursing programs will provide representatives who can speak to

institutional operations, while students will contribute the applicant perspective. Additional subject-matter participants may be invited as topics require.

Workgroups will allow detailed exploration of issues that affect particular communities, such as community colleges or applicants navigating prerequisite pathways. These groups will surface practical considerations, identify emerging risks, and develop options for TXHES review. A designated representative may help coordinate communication between a workgroup and the broader advisory structure, ensuring continuity and clarity.

Vendor representatives may participate in discussions where technical expertise is required; however, engagement with the vendor will occur under TXHES direction and within the governance framework established in this plan.

5.4 How Stakeholder Input Informs Decisions

Input gathered through advisory discussions and workgroups will feed into established governance and continuous improvement pathways. TXHES will review recommendations, evaluate implications for policy, cost, technical feasibility, and statewide consistency, and determine whether and when action is appropriate.

Some issues may be addressed through configuration updates or training refinements, while others may require future planning cycles or additional direction from state leadership. In all cases, TXHES will communicate outcomes and rationales so participants understand how their perspectives were considered and applied.

By integrating engagement learnings into formal decision processes, the implementation approach ensures that participation strengthens system performance while maintaining clarity of TXHES authority and accountability.

5.5 Stakeholder Concerns and Mitigation Crosswalk

Stakeholder engagement conducted during the feasibility phase generated consistent and thoughtful feedback regarding potential risks, operational impacts, and areas requiring careful design during implementation. Participants across Nursing Advisory Committee discussions, roundtables, institutional interviews, and student and institution surveys indicated the importance of protecting program autonomy, minimizing disruption to admissions operations, maintaining affordability, and ensuring that applicants (particularly those from historically underrepresented or resource-constrained backgrounds) are not disadvantaged by the transition. These are all important areas for continued stakeholder engagement discussions and collaboration.

The implementation plan was developed with these concerns in mind. Many of the structures described throughout this plan (e.g., phased adoption, readiness validation, governance pathways, vendor oversight mechanisms, and continuous quality improvement) were designed specifically to manage the issues stakeholders identified.

The crosswalk below provides traceability between stakeholder feedback and the mechanisms TXHES will use to manage risk during deployment. Mitigation does not necessarily mean elimination of a concern. Rather, it identifies the policy, financial, operational, technical, or governance tools through which TXHES will monitor conditions, make determinations, and adjust over time. In many cases, mitigation takes the form of sequencing, transparency, oversight, or structured opportunities for input rather than immediate uniform solutions.

To clarify how concerns are addressed, the crosswalk categorizes mitigation strategies by the primary mechanism TXHES will use to manage risk:

- **Governance.** Addressed through framework outlining decision rights, oversight structures, rule/standard setting, accountability, and transparency.
- **Technical.** Addressed through system configuration, integrations, security, or vendor performance.
- **Operational.** Addressed through process design, sequencing, staffing, or implementation supports.
- **Financial.** Addressed through affordability strategies, funding approaches, or cost containment.

Table 5.5 Mitigation Strategies to Address Stakeholder Concerns

| Governance Strategies | | |
|--|--|---|
| Concern | Sources | Mitigation |
| Need to account for highly variable admissions and progression models rather than apply a one-size-fits-all | NAC Roundtables Institutional feedback | The governance framework establishes structured pathways for stakeholder input into standards and policy decisions while reserving final authority to TXHES. TXHES will define the policy boundaries within which program-level variation is maintained. Configuration will allow institutions to retain control of elements necessary for admissions autonomy (e.g., requirements, milestones, evaluation methods) while operating inside statewide standards. |
| Risk of inaccurate or misleading representation of seat availability | NAC Roundtables Institutional feedback | TXHES will establish standardized methods for communicating program capacity, including models that accommodate flex enrollment or progression-based advancement. |
| Programs fear being overwhelmed by broader visibility | Institutional feedback | TXHES will retain authority over statewide communication and marketing parameters to balance transparency with regional workforce capacity and mission commitments. |
| Equity impact on first-generation or resource-constrained students | Roundtables | TXHES will align configuration, communication standards, and affordability policy with statewide access objectives and will monitor outcomes for unintended disparities. |
| Technical Strategies | | |
| Concern | Sources | Mitigation |
| Potential for misuse of data | NAC Roundtables | TXHES will enforce statewide data-use standards supported by role-based access controls and monitored vendor compliance. |
| Transcript verification delays or errors | Roundtables Student survey | Vendor performance expectations will be defined contractually and monitored by TXHES, with formal escalation pathways and recurring performance review. |
| Integration with institutional systems | NAC | TXHES will prioritize high-value integrations based on phase placement and readiness, while allowing |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Roundtables Institution survey | temporary or manual approaches where additional preparation is required. |
| Issues with applicant experience using NursingCAS | Student survey | TXHES will work with vendor to ensure interface streamlines user experience (e.g. easy process to enter transcripts) |
| Operational Strategies | | |
| Concern | Sources | Mitigation |
| Staff workload during transition | Roundtables Institution survey | TXHES will structure onboarding to reduce duplicative local activity, standardize processes where possible, and monitor workload signals during early cycles to inform adjustments. |
| Need for strong applicant guidance and human support | Roundtables Student survey | TXHES will maintain institutional advising authority while ensuring applicants have access to centralized technical assistance resources. Clarity of materials will be validated prior to launch. |
| Fear of major disruption at go-live | Roundtables Institution survey | TXHES will sequence adoption through readiness validation, limited cohorts, and staged expansion rather than a single statewide conversion. |
| Uncertainty about benefits to institutions | NAC Roundtables | TXHES will publish operational results from early cohorts and demonstrate functionality such as reporting, dashboards, and administrative efficiencies. |
| Financial Strategies | | |
| Concern | Sources | Mitigation |
| Introduction of applicant fees where none currently exist | NAC Roundtables Student survey Institution survey Institutional feedback | TXHES will develop and recommend an affordability strategy for consideration by state leadership, informed by advisory input and ongoing monitoring of applicant behavior and equity indicators. |
| Limited institutional budgets | Roundtables Institution survey | TXHES will reduce local exposure through phased onboarding, standardized configurations, centralized training assets, and evaluation of transition support options. Sequencing will reflect readiness and resource constraints. |

6. Phased Implementation Approach

6.1 Overview of Phases

TXHES will implement TexNCAS using a multi-phase approach that supports learning, risk management, and progressive expansion of participation. Phasing recognizes variation in institutional environments and allows the system to mature under real operating conditions before broader adoption.

Final placement within phases will depend on documented readiness conditions and the availability of implementation capacity.

The phases are currently envisioned as follows:

- **Phase 1** – Early adopters with prior CAS experience or strong readiness indicators.
- **Phase 2** – Additional institutions prepared to onboard after incorporation of lessons learned from Phase 1.
- **Phase 3** – Remaining institutions requiring longer preparation timelines or alignment with internal processes.

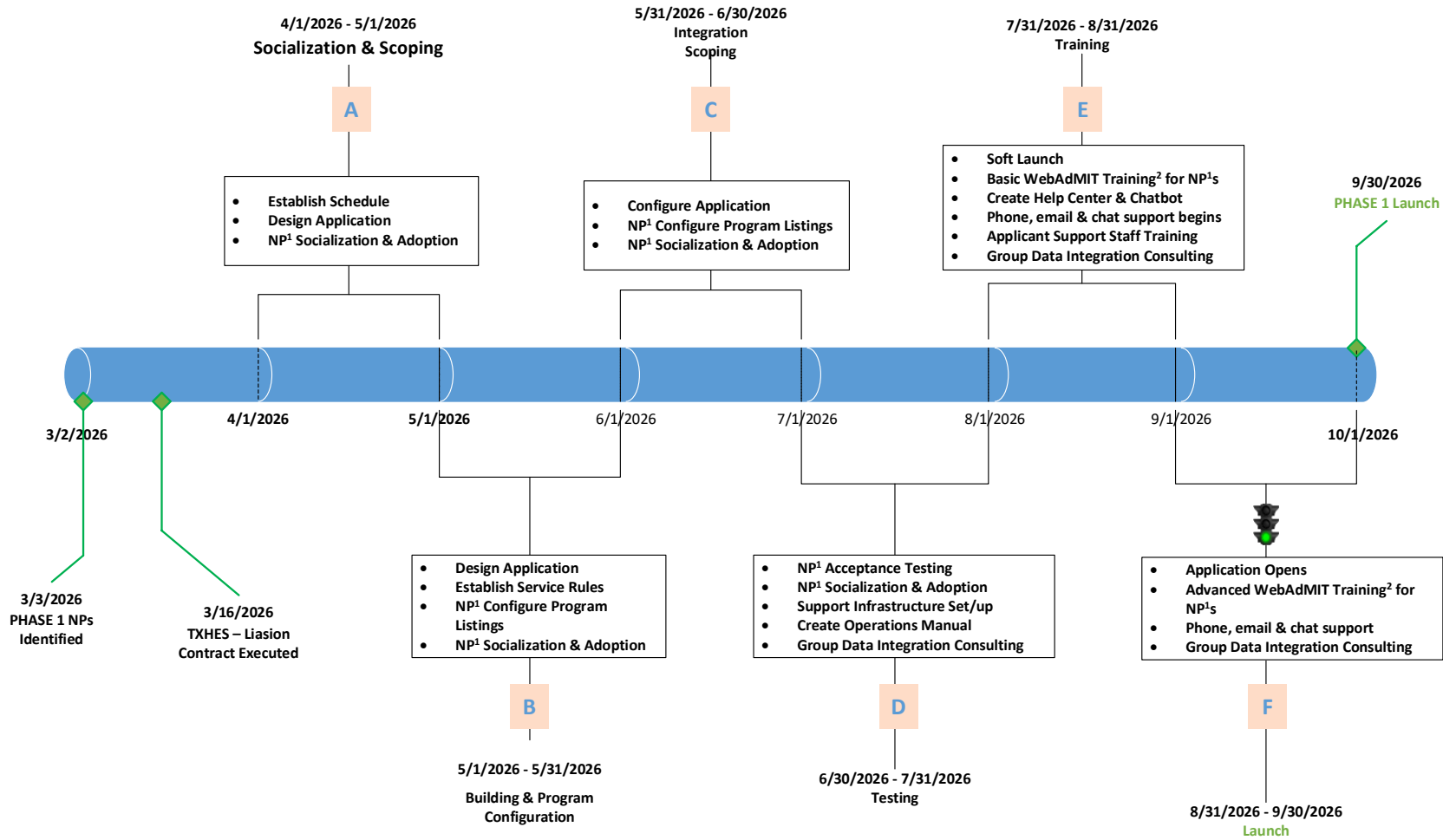
TXHES's planning objective is to position all programs for participation by fall 2028, while ensuring early phases generate meaningful operational insight.

Specific methods for determining placement are described in the readiness assessment section that follows.

See Figure 6.1-A below for a graphical depiction of 2026 activities and milestones and Figure 6.1-B for 2027 and 2028 activities and milestones.

Figure 6.1-A: Phase 1 Timeline

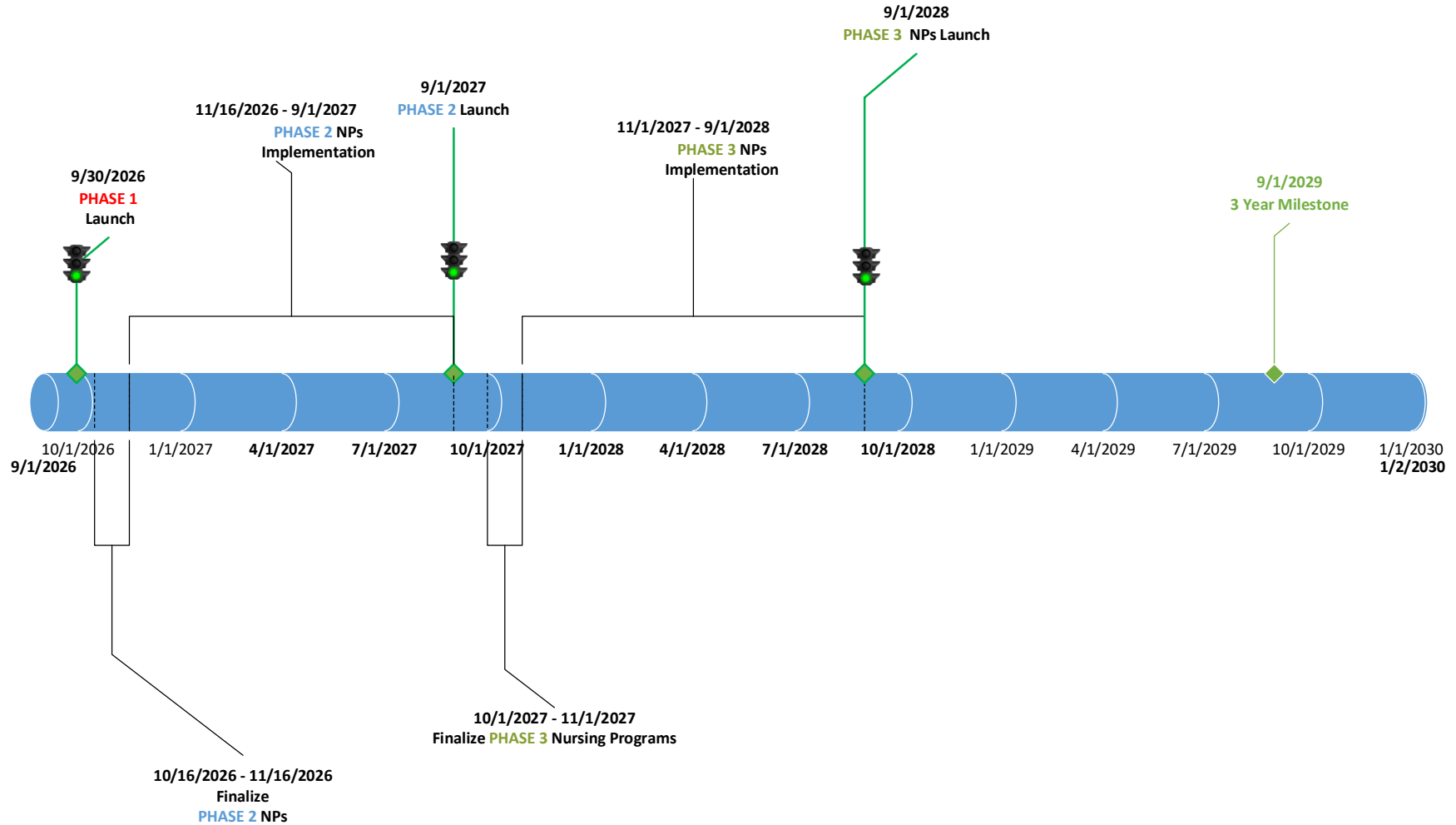
TexNCAS Option 1: Deploy NursingCAS configured for Texas PHASE 1: 3/2026 – 9/2026



FOOTNOTES
¹“NP” = Participating Nursing Programs
²Training via Webinars & Self-Paced Learning

Figure 6.1-B: Phases 2 and 3 Timeline

TexNCAS Option 1: Deploy NursingCAS configured for Texas
PHASE 2 and PHASE 3



6.2 Rationale for Phasing

Texas nursing programs operate within a wide range of institutional environments. Differences exist not only in applicant volume and staffing capacity, but also in internal approval pathways, technology landscapes, procurement requirements, and change management processes. Some institutions currently rely on localized workflows, while others are already using NursingCAS or pursuing independent modernization efforts. These variations mean that the conditions necessary for successful participation will not materialize uniformly across the state or on the same timeline.

A phased implementation strategy allows TXHES to account for this diversity while maintaining forward momentum. By sequencing participation, TXHES can:

- Leverage institutions with prior CAS experience or strong readiness signals as early adopters.
- Validate configuration choices, training approaches, and support models under real operating conditions.
- Incorporate lessons learned before expanding to additional programs.
- Reduce the likelihood that institutions are asked to transition before local governance, staffing, or competing priorities can be aligned.

Sequencing also allows TXHES to monitor system performance and adjust support strategies before expanding participation.

Phasing is therefore a risk-management and capacity-building tool. It enables progress toward statewide adoption while recognizing that sustainable change requires coordination within each institution as well as across the system.

The specific mechanisms used to determine timing for participation are described in the readiness assessment section below.

7. Readiness Assessment Framework for TexNCAS Participation

7.1 Purpose of the Readiness Framework

The transition to TexNCAS represents a significant operational change for participating nursing programs. Successful launch requires alignment among institutional leadership, admissions staff, technical environments, and applicant communication practices. The readiness framework is designed to provide confidence to institutions, policymakers, and TXHES that programs will enter the system at a point when they can succeed.

The framework protects institutions from being placed into a go-live window before they have the staffing, processes, or local authority necessary to operate effectively. It provides policymakers assurance that implementation is disciplined, repeatable, and attentive to risk, and it gives TXHES a structured method to sequence onboarding to reduce the likelihood of service disruption or emergency intervention. This approach also protects applicants by reducing the likelihood of disruptions during admissions cycles.

7.2 Development and Approval of Criteria

TXHES will develop readiness criteria in consultation with the advisory group. Input from stakeholders will help ensure that standards reflect on-the-ground realities across community colleges, universities, and private institutions. Following consultation, TXHES will finalize and publish the criteria so that expectations are transparent and consistently applied statewide.

Establishing statewide consistency is essential. While individual circumstances vary, all participating programs must demonstrate a baseline capacity to manage applications, communicate with students, and engage in required training and testing activities. Clear publication of criteria allows institutions to plan internally and seek assistance early.

7.3 Core Dimensions of Readiness

Consistent with themes raised by stakeholders during the feasibility study, readiness will consider multiple dimensions of preparedness rather than a single measure. These dimensions are expected to include leadership commitment to participation, availability of staff resources, stability of admissions workflows, reliability of data practices, ability to manage residency and prerequisite determinations, engagement in training, and plans for communicating changes to applicants.

Considering readiness across several domains ensures that no program is labeled prepared or unprepared based on one factor alone. The goal is a balanced understanding of risk and capability.

7.4 Assessment Process

The assessment process will begin with structured self-evaluation by each program. Institutions will have the opportunity to describe current operations, identify dependencies, and flag areas where additional preparation may be required. TXHES and the vendor may conduct follow-up discussions to clarify responses and to better understand local circumstances.

The tone of this process is collaborative. It is not designed as an audit or compliance exercise. Additionally, it informs, but does not solely determine, phase placement. Instead, it creates a shared view of what must be in place for launch to be smooth for students and staff.

7.5 Use of Findings and Phasing

Results of readiness assessments will guide sequencing decisions. Programs demonstrating strong preparation and internal alignment may be positioned for earlier onboarding. Identification of readiness gaps will trigger additional and prioritized support. Programs that identify gaps will not be penalized; instead, TXHES will work with them to determine a more appropriate timeline. This approach supports deliberate expansion of TexNCAS, allowing lessons from early adopters to inform later waves while avoiding unnecessary pressure on institutions that require additional time.

7.6 Connection to Support and Technical Assistance

Identification of readiness gaps will trigger support. TXHES, in coordination with the vendor, will use assessment findings to prioritize training, develop targeted guidance, and facilitate peer learning. Where common challenges emerge, TXHES may develop shared tools or standardized resources to reduce duplication of effort across institutions.

7.7 Reassessment and Changing Circumstances

Institutional conditions can evolve due to staffing changes, leadership transitions, or competing priorities. Programs may request reassessment if they believe their readiness posture has materially changed. TXHES may also revisit earlier determinations as statewide timelines are refined. This flexibility allows implementation to remain responsive while maintaining overall structure.

7.8 Decision Authority and Escalation

While advisory input and collaboration are central to the process, TXHES retains responsibility for final decisions regarding onboarding sequence. This accountability ensures that statewide commitments are met and that risk is managed consistently. When disagreements arise, established governance pathways will allow concerns to be elevated and resolved transparently.

7.9 Ongoing Learning

Readiness methodology itself will improve as implementation progresses. Feedback from participating programs, observed outcomes, and performance data will inform refinements to criteria and support models. In this way, the framework becomes more predictive and more useful over time.

7.10 Linking Readiness Results to Phased Implementation

The purpose of readiness assessment is to align each institution's onboarding timeline with its demonstrated operational preparedness, leadership alignment, and capacity to support applicants successfully. Mapping readiness to phases allows TXHES to pace implementation responsibly, reduce risk, and direct support resources where they are most needed. Phase placement is not a permanent designation and does not reflect institutional quality; rather, it is a planning tool to promote stable launches across a diverse statewide environment.

Phasing is not intended to categorize programs as high or low performers. Rather, it ensures that the timing of implementation matches the conditions necessary for a stable launch for students and staff.

7.10.1 Phase Assignment Principles

Programs will generally fall into one of three planning categories:

Phase 1 – Early Implementers. Institutions demonstrating strong leadership commitment, stable admissions operations, available staffing, and readiness to engage in configuration and testing may be invited to participate in initial launch activities. These programs help validate processes, training approaches, and support models for the broader field.

Phase 2 – Supported Implementers. Institutions that are broadly prepared but require targeted work in specific areas (e.g., data mapping, transcript workflows, communication planning) will enter a subsequent phase. Between assessment and go-live, TXHES and the vendor will focus assistance on the defined gaps.

Phase 3 – Extended Preparation. Programs identifying significant dependencies, competing priorities, or resource constraints will be scheduled for later participation. Additional preparation time allows these institutions to strengthen internal conditions while benefiting from lessons learned in earlier waves.

7.10.2 Movement Between Phases

Phase designations are fluid and expected to evolve. Institutions may advance more quickly than initially projected or may request additional time if circumstances change. Movement across phases will occur when previously identified readiness factors are addressed. TXHES will maintain a transparent process for confirming when conditions support progression toward launch.

8. Configuration and Launch Activities

8.1 Initial System Configuration

The TexNCAS platform organizes applicant information into four primary data categories (“quadrants”) that together support standardized application intake while preserving the information required for individual program review.

Figure 8.1 Data Configuration Categories

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Personal Information Standardized biographic data, contact details, citizenship status, family information, race/ethnicity | 2. Academic History High schools and colleges attended, transcripts, standardized test scores |
| 3. Supporting Information Qualitative data such as work and volunteer history, achievements, licensure, certifications, legal releases | 4. Program-Specific Information Requirements unique to specific programs, such as prerequisite courses, school-specific documents, essay prompts, recommendation letters |

Data specifications for quadrants 1, 2, and 3 will be consistent across participating programs. TXHES will establish configuration standards for these areas, informed by recommendations from the advisory group, applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, and operational experience from comparable implementations. Establishing common expectations in these quadrants supports transparency for applicants, administrative efficiency for institutions, and sustainability for the statewide system.

Quadrant 4 allows collection of information necessary to support program-level admissions evaluation. While these elements may vary across institutions, configuration will occur within parameters defined by TXHES to ensure consistency, usability, and system performance. TXHES will work collaboratively with individual programs and the vendor to document and validate these requirements. This approach reflects stakeholder concerns about preserving accreditation compliance and institutional autonomy while maintaining the benefits of a centralized platform.

8.2 Testing and Go-Live

Each implementation phase will include structured activities designed to confirm that both system configuration and institutional preparation are sufficient to support a successful launch. These activities include:

- **Configuration Validation.** Phase 1 will include initial establishment of the Texas-specific platform environment and baseline configuration standards. In all phases, TXHES, in coordination with the vendor and participating institutions, will confirm that program-specific elements are accurately represented and function as intended.
- **Program Testing.** Each institution will conduct end-user testing within a controlled environment to verify workflows, content presentation, and data handling prior to launch.

- **Targeted Training.** Programs scheduled within a phase will receive live and on-demand training aligned to their configuration and operational needs, supported by documentation and technical assistance.
- **Defined Go-Live Window.** TXHES, informed by advisory input and operational readiness signals, will establish the go-live timeframe for each phase.

Advancement to go-live will occur only when readiness expectations described in this plan are satisfied.

9. Training, Support, and Communications

Stakeholders consistently emphasized that successful adoption depends not only on technology, but on whether institutions receive timely, practical, and sustained support throughout transition. Nursing programs vary widely in staffing models, prior CAS experience, internal approval processes, and available technical resources. A uniform support model would therefore leave some institutions underserved while overburdening others.

For this reason, training and technical assistance will be structured, predictable, and scalable. Support intensity will be informed by readiness findings, prior experience, and the complexity of each program's environment. Institutions familiar with NursingCAS may require focused orientation and configuration guidance, while those new to centralized platforms may benefit from deeper engagement, additional practice opportunities, and extended access to subject-matter expertise.

TXHES will coordinate closely with the vendor to ensure that institutions have access to multiple forms of assistance, including scheduled training sessions, open office hours, documented guidance, and defined pathways for issue escalation. TXHES will actively monitor utilization, response effectiveness, and emerging patterns of need to ensure support resources are aligned with areas of greatest implementation risk.

Importantly, support does not end at go-live. Early operational cycles typically surface new questions as staff and applicants interact with the system under real conditions. Continued availability of assistance, rapid clarification of emerging issues, and incorporation of lessons learned into future training materials will be central to stabilizing the platform statewide.

The effectiveness of training and technical assistance will itself be subject to ongoing TXHES oversight. Feedback from institutions, student experience indicators, help-desk patterns, and resolution timelines will inform adjustments to delivery methods, materials, and staffing. Where recurring gaps or delays are identified, TXHES will work with the vendor to modify approaches, expand support where necessary, and incorporate findings into future readiness and onboarding activities. These inputs will also enter the continuous quality improvement process to drive refinement of both the support model and system configuration.

Communications are a critical component of this support strategy. Regular updates, clear expectations, and transparent timelines will help institutions plan internal work, prepare staff, and reduce uncertainty. Communication channels will also provide structured opportunities for programs to surface concerns early, allowing TXHES and the vendor to respond before issues escalate.

The communication and support cadence illustrated in Figure 9 reflects this lifecycle approach.

Figure 9. Communication and Support Cadence

Touchpoints across implementation phases — structured for predictability, accessibility, and responsiveness

| | PRE-GO-LIVE | GO-LIVE WINDOW | POST-GO-LIVE |
|---|---|---|--|
|  Phase-Specific Training | Role-based training for admissions staff, registrars, and IT contacts; hands-on configuration walkthroughs INTENSIVE — WEEKLY | Targeted refreshers and just-in-time support for go-live procedures; troubleshooting workshops FOCUSED — AS NEEDED | On-demand training resources; onboarding materials for new staff; lessons-learned for next-phase programs SELF-SERVICE + PERIODIC |
|  Regular Updates from TXHES | Implementation status briefings; milestone notifications; configuration timeline updates; readiness check-ins BI-WEEKLY BRIEFINGS | Go-live status reports; real-time issue communication; applicant volume and system performance updates WEEKLY (OR MORE FREQUENT) | Cycle performance summaries; planned enhancements; advisory committee update communications MONTHLY → QUARTERLY |
|  Defined Escalation Pathways | Escalation framework published; program contacts and TXHES leads identified; vendor escalation tiers confirmed FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED | Active issue triage; tiered response (program → TXHES → vendor); severity-based SLAs in effect REAL-TIME — SLA-DRIVEN | Issue trend review; root-cause analysis of recurring problems; governance escalation for systemic issues STRUCTURED REVIEW CYCLES |
|  Ongoing Vendor Technical Support | Help Center and documentation available; vendor support contacts established; integration testing assistance AVAILABLE ON REQUEST | Priority support with contracted SLAs; severity-tiered incident response (2-hr critical); dedicated Liaison channel CONTINUOUS — PER SLA | Standard support hours (9–5 ET); platform maintenance notifications; upgrade testing; enhancement tracking BUSINESS HOURS + SCHEDULED |

GUIDING PRINCIPLE Communication intensity is highest during pre-go-live preparation and the go-live window, then transitions to a predictable, structured cadence during steady-state operations. At every stage, programs have a clear point of contact and a defined path to resolution.

High intensity / frequency

Moderate intensity / frequency

Lower intensity / self-service

10. Continuous Quality Improvement

10.1 Purpose of the Continuous Improvement Framework

TexNCAS is expected to evolve over time in response to operational experience, stakeholder input, legislative direction, evolving educational practices, and applicant expectations. This will occur through a continuous quality improvement (CQI) framework that provides a structured, transparent method for identifying, evaluating, prioritizing, and implementing changes while maintaining system stability and statewide consistency.

The CQI framework establishes the formal processes through which feedback is gathered, evaluated, prioritized, funded, and implemented over time. It ensures that TexNCAS remains responsive while preventing fragmented or duplicative customization that could undermine affordability or statewide consistency and alignment with statutory objectives. This framework applies equally to system functionality, reporting capabilities, and support services.

Continuous Improvement Guiding Principles

- 1. TXHES retains responsibility for balancing program and applicant benefit with long-term sustainability and state priorities for the system.**
- 2. Participating programs and students who have used the CAS must have meaningful opportunities for input into identifying and prioritizing improvement opportunities.**
- 3. Improvement decisions should be informed by documented operational experience, measurable impact, and patterns observed across institutions.**
- 4. Since not every request for change can be implemented immediately (or at all), change decisions and prioritization must be transparent and equitable.**

10.2 Sources of Improvement Input

Continuous improvement activities will draw from multiple inputs. Participating programs will identify workflow challenges, reporting needs, or applicant communication issues encountered during live operations. Student representatives will contribute perspective on usability, clarity, and barriers within the application experience. TXHES staff and vendor analytics will provide additional insight derived from system performance data, cycle timing, and error trends. This multi-source approach ensures that improvement discussions are grounded in evidence rather than anecdote.

10.3 Structured Intake and Documentation

TXHES will maintain a formal intake mechanism for enhancement requests and operational issues. Submissions will be documented in a standardized format so that scope, impact, urgency, and affected stakeholders are clear. Maintaining a visible inventory of requests allows participants to see that suggestions are captured and tracked even when immediate action is not possible.

10.4 Review and Advisory Engagement

The advisory group will play a continuing role in the CQI lifecycle. Representatives of institutions and students will review themes emerging from the request inventory, provide context regarding field impact, and help TXHES understand tradeoffs across program types. Advisory participation strengthens decision quality but does not replace TXHES accountability for final determinations.

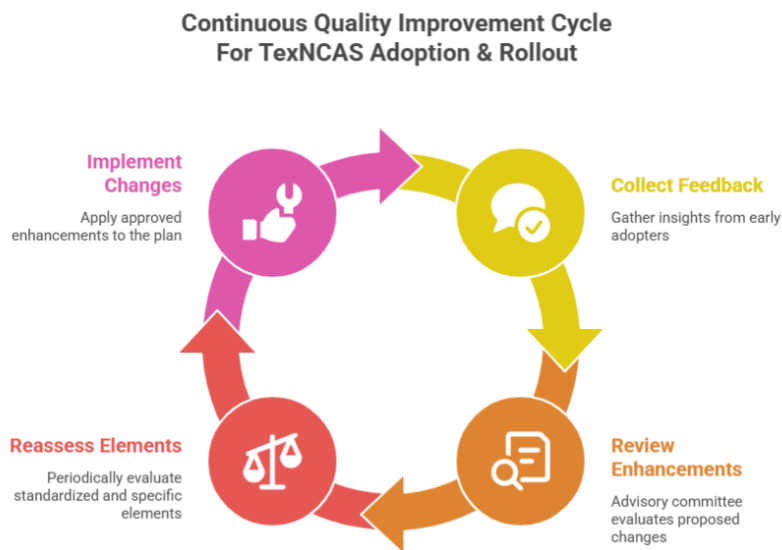
10.5 Prioritization and Decision Authority

Using input from stakeholders, operational data, statutory considerations, and available financial capacity, TXHES will determine which changes move forward within a given cycle. Some adjustments may be achievable through configuration; others may require vendor development, funding approval, or coordination across institutions.

Because demand for enhancement may exceed available resources, a structured approach to prioritization will be developed. Decisions and rationales will be communicated to participants to maintain trust in the process.

The following figure illustrates how improvement opportunities move from identification through evaluation, approval, and release.

Figure 10.5: TexNCAS CQI Process



10.6 Implementation Pathways

Approved changes will follow structured pathways depending on complexity. Smaller configuration adjustments may occur within routine release schedules. Larger items may require design sessions, testing windows, training updates, and coordinated communication to applicants and staff. Where appropriate, TXHES may pilot significant changes with a limited group of institutions before broader deployment.

10.7 Communication and Transparency

Visibility is critical to sustaining engagement. To ensure stakeholders can see progress and understand constraints, TXHES will provide regular updates to the advisory group and via its website on requests received; items under review; approved priorities; implementation timelines; and completed improvements.

10.8 Relationship to Financial Governance

CQI operates within the financial guardrails established in the vendor management framework. Proposed enhancements will be evaluated not only for functional merit but also for cost, sustainability, and alignment with statewide objectives. In this way, improvement activity remains compatible with long-term affordability.

10.9 Annual and Ad-Hoc Review Cycles

In addition to ongoing intake, TXHES will conduct structured annual reviews to evaluate broader opportunities for refinement, including reassessment of standardized versus institution-specific elements. These cycles provide a predictable moment for participants to elevate strategic needs beyond immediate operational fixes. Urgent matters affecting compliance, applicant equity, or system reliability may be addressed outside the annual cycle.

10.10 Foundation in TMDSAS CQI Approach

TexNCAS will draw upon the continuous improvement practices TXHEWS is using within the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS). Under this model, TXHES defines performance measurement priorities to ensure alignment with state objectives, consistency of metrics, and clear pathways for translating findings into operational action.

Ongoing engagement with an advisory committee comprised of participating institutions helps TXHES ensure that evaluation remains grounded in real-world experience and responsive to emerging developments affecting applicants and programs. TXHES maintains responsibility for defining the information required, validating data integrity, and determining how results influence system configuration, support models, and future investments.

Reliable access to timely data, combined with dedicated analytical capacity, enables TXHES to monitor trends, identify recurring issues, and evaluate whether implemented changes are achieving intended outcomes. Findings are communicated through established governance channels so participants understand both performance results and resulting decisions.

This approach reinforces that continuous improvement is not episodic. It is a standing management function that supports accountability, transparency, and long-term system sustainability.

10.11 Maturation Over Time

As the system stabilizes, CQI emphasis will gradually shift from foundational functionality toward optimization, analytics, and user experience enhancements. The structure described here is intended to support that evolution without requiring reinvention of governance mechanisms.

11. Measuring Success and System Performance

TexNCAS is being implemented to advance the outcomes envisioned in House Bill 2851 and the 2024 recommendations of the [Governor's Task Force on Health Care Workforce Shortages](#) while improving experience and operational efficiency for applicants and institutions. Measuring success therefore requires attention not only to system functionality, but also to equity, usability, transparency, and the

extent to which the service supports more effective statewide workforce-related planning. TXHES will steward this framework to ensure measurement supports decision-making, transparency, and long-term system health.

Performance measurement will be iterative. Early cycles will emphasize stabilization and adoption; over time, metrics will mature to include deeper indicators of effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability. TXHES will periodically review the performance framework to confirm that measures remain aligned with legislative direction and operational realities.

11.1 Alignment to HB 2851 Objectives

HB 2851 seeks to strengthen the state’s understanding of demand for nursing education and improve the ability of applicants to identify viable pathways into nursing programs. Accordingly, system performance will be evaluated in part on whether TexNCAS improves:

- **Equitable Access.** Are qualified applicants able to discover and pursue appropriate opportunities regardless of geography or background?
- **Scalability.** Can the system support increasing participation, volume, and functional expectations without degradation in service?
- **Sustainability.** Can operations, governance, and cost structures be maintained over time while continuing to evolve?

11.2 Performance Indicators

Consistent with stakeholder input gathered throughout the feasibility process, TXHES will monitor a balanced set of indicators of system performance across applicants, institutions, system operations, and nursing education demand and utilization.

Applicant-Focused Measures. These respond directly to NAC and student emphasis on clarity, navigation, and burden. Indicators will include, at minimum, trends in:

- Application completion rates
- Frequency and types of errors or rework
- Processing timelines
- User support demand patterns
- Applicant-reported ease of use, such as understanding next steps.

Student feedback highlighted recurring friction around manual data entry, transcript handling, and unclear instructions. Reductions in these pain points will serve as key markers of progress.

Institutional Experience Measures. Institutions emphasized the importance of efficiency, predictability, and preservation of their ability to manage admissions responsibly. Performance indicators are intended to guide improvement, investment, and prioritization. They are not designed to rank institutions or penalize participation. Maintaining this posture is essential to sustaining trust and collaboration.

Indicators of institutional experience may include:

- Stability of admissions calendars.
- Reduction in manual handling of routine tasks.
- Reliability of data exchange.
- Usability of dashboards and reporting.
- Program satisfaction over time.

System Function Measures. At the system level, TXHES will monitor platform reliability, cycle times, and volume capacity to ensure the infrastructure can expand as participation grows. Success will also include the system’s ability to support visibility into program characteristics, timelines, and outcomes that influence enrollment decisions. This reflects repeated stakeholder emphasis on the need for applicants to have easy access to clear, comparable information to make decisions.

Nursing Education Demand and Utilization Measures. A core legislative driver for TexNCAS is improving the state’s ability to accurately determine the unique number of applicants to nursing programs and the number of qualified applicants denied admission due to program capacity. Progress toward this capability will be an important measure of success over time and across cycles. In addition, to maximize use of existing nursing education capacity and quantify any need to add capacity, the system must have the capability to track the number and locations of unfilled seats and have a mechanism to ensure timely action to match potentially qualified applicants with open seats. System performance related to identifying and filling unfilled seats is therefore a critical measure of success.

11.3 Role of the Advisory Group

The advisory group will play a central role in shaping how success is defined and evaluated. Participating programs and student representatives bring direct knowledge of how admissions operations function in practice, where burdens arise, and what improvements matter most to applicants. Their involvement helps ensure that performance measures reflect real conditions rather than theoretical expectations.

Equally important, shared participation in defining success strengthens confidence in the results. When institutions recognize their experience and priorities in the measurement framework, findings are more likely to be viewed as credible, actionable, and fair. This collaborative approach reduces the risk that metrics are perceived as externally imposed or disconnected from day-to-day realities, while preserving TXHES authority to maintain statewide consistency.

12. Technical Considerations

The implementation plan relies on a vendor-hosted platform model in which the underlying technology infrastructure, data security environment, and core application software are provided and maintained by Liaison. This approach carries distinct advantages for implementation speed and technical risk but also introduces dependencies that TXHES must manage actively through contracting, governance, and operational oversight.

The following considerations are intended to provide the advisory committee with transparency about how technology decisions shape the implementation timeline, program experience, and long-term sustainability of TexNCAS.

12.1 Platform Build and Configuration Sequencing

Before any nursing program can begin configuring its admissions requirements within TexNCAS, the vendor must first build the Texas-specific instance of its CAS platform. This includes configuring the back-end infrastructure, the applicant-facing interface, and the nursing school program management portal. The platform build is a prerequisite to program-level configuration and is reflected in the implementation timeline as a distinct activity (see item C in [Figure 6.1-A: Phase 1 Timeline](#) above).

TXHES will approve baseline configuration standards before program-level configuration begins. Then configuration proceeds in the two layers described in Section 6, with common elements informed by advisory input, and program-specific settings developed through direct collaboration between each

program, TXHES, and Liaison. Programs cannot begin testing or training until their configuration is substantially complete. This dependency is the primary reason the implementation timeline builds in lead time before go-live windows and why Phase 1 should be scoped to a manageable number of programs.

12.2 Data Integration with Institutional Systems

Texas nursing programs operate a variety of institutional systems, including Student Information Systems, applicant tracking platforms, and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools for applicant recruitment. A recurring concern among stakeholders has been how TexNCAS will exchange data with these systems.

The vendor's platform provides a set of application programming interfaces (APIs) and data export and import tools that enable information to flow between TexNCAS and institutional systems. Several Texas institutions with the vendor's current NursingCAS implementations already use these integration capabilities, which reduces the technical lift for those programs during Phase 1. For programs without prior Liaison experience, data integration will require coordination between the program's IT staff, TXHES, and the vendor to define data exchange requirements, test connections, and validate that information is transferred accurately. TXHES will coordinate prioritization of integration support based on readiness and phase placement.

Integration complexity will vary by institution. Programs with internal systems may need batch-file processes or direct API connections to transfer applicant data into their existing workflows. Programs with less complex environments may want to rely primarily on the vendor's built-in reporting and export tools. The implementation plan accommodates this variation through readiness-based sequencing and dedicated technical support during each phase.

12.3 Data Privacy, Security, and Compliance

TexNCAS will collect, store, and transmit sensitive personal information from applicants, including academic records, contact information, and supporting documents. Compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state data privacy requirements is a baseline obligation for the platform and all participating entities.

Under the vendor-hosted model, Liaison is contractually obligated to maintain the security of the platform environment, including data security, backup and disaster recovery, and breach notification. The draft contract requires the vendor to maintain commercially reasonable security standards, carry adequate liability insurance, and report any data security breaches to TXHES within two business days. TXHES will monitor compliance through defined vendor oversight activities.

TXHES retains governance authority over data access policies, role-based access definitions, and the rules governing how applicant data may be shared with participating programs. These policies will be developed in coordination with the advisory committee and codified as part of the governance framework. Ongoing compliance monitoring and periodic security reviews will be incorporated into TXHES's vendor management responsibilities.

12.4 System Reliability, Scalability, and Performance

TexNCAS is projected to serve upward of 40,000 applicants annually at full statewide adoption, a volume approximately three times larger than the current TMDSAS service. System load is expected to

concentrate around three critical periods: the opening of the application cycle, major application deadlines, and periods of high applicant status-checking activity.

Liaison’s platform operates on cloud-based infrastructure (Amazon Web Services) and is designed for high availability, with a contractual up-time commitment of 99.5% monthly. The platform currently supports millions of applicants and submissions annually across its national CAS implementations. Nevertheless, TXHES will establish performance monitoring expectations and service level agreements that reflect the specific demands of the Texas application cycle, including peak-load planning and incident response protocols.

The phased implementation approach provides an additional layer of risk management for system performance. Phase 1 will operate at a fraction of the projected statewide volume, allowing TXHES and Liaison to identify any performance concerns before the platform is scaled to serve all Texas nursing programs.

12.5 Vendor Dependency and Long-Term Flexibility

Selecting a vendor-hosted model means that TXHES does not own or directly control the underlying software, data architecture, or product development roadmap. While this significantly reduces the upfront technical burden and implementation timeline, it introduces a structural dependency on the vendor for system enhancements, bug fixes, and platform upgrades.

The feasibility analysis rated TXHES’s control over system architecture as “Medium” under Option 1, reflecting this tradeoff. TXHES can configure and influence the system but cannot unilaterally direct changes to the platform’s core functionality.

To manage this dependency, the implementation plan recommends that the contractual framework include provisions for data portability, source code escrow, upgrade notification and testing windows, defined escalation pathways for unresolved enhancement requests, and an exit strategy that protects TXHES’s and Texas’ interests in the event the vendor relationship is terminated. These provisions will be refined during contract finalization.

13. Operational Considerations

The operational feasibility of TexNCAS depends not only on the technology platform but also on the ability of TXHES, nursing programs, and the vendor to align day-to-day workflows, staffing, and institutional processes with the new system. Stakeholder feedback consistently emphasized that operational success requires attention to how the system functions in practice, not just whether it can be built. The following considerations address the operational dimensions of implementation that will shape program experience and applicant outcomes.

13.1 Alignment with Admissions Calendars and Workflows

Texas nursing programs operate on diverse admissions calendars, with application windows, review periods, and decision timelines that vary by program type (BSN, ABSN, RN-to-BSN, ADN, LVN, and graduate programs) and by institution. Some programs admit students multiple times per year; others follow a single annual cycle. Implementation activities, including configuration, testing, and go-live, must be sequenced to avoid disrupting active admissions cycles.

The phased approach is designed to accommodate this variation. TXHES will confirm that proposed go-live timing does not conflict with active admissions windows. Phase 1 programs will be selected in part based on the alignment of their admissions calendars with the available configuration and testing windows. Subsequent phases will apply lessons learned from Phase 1 to improve the timing and sequencing of onboarding activities for programs with different cycle structures.

13.2 Institutional Staffing and Capacity

Implementation will require meaningful engagement from institutional staff, including admissions officers, registrars, IT personnel, and in some cases faculty members who participate in admissions committees. Stakeholder feedback indicated that many programs, particularly those at smaller institutions or community colleges, have limited staff capacity to absorb additional implementation responsibilities alongside their regular duties.

The implementation plan addresses this concern through readiness-based participation, phase-specific training, and the provision of dedicated support from both TXHES and the vendor during onboarding. TXHES will also work with programs to identify internal obstacles to implementation, such as pending institutional IT approvals, competing internal projects, or staffing constraints, and to develop program-specific transition plans where warranted. Where constraints are identified, phase placement may be adjusted.

13.3 Managing the Transition from Existing Systems

A significant operational consideration is the transition path for programs that currently use Liaison's NursingCAS (approximately 30 Texas programs), programs that use proprietary institutional application systems, and programs that rely on manual or paper-based processes. Each group presents distinct transition challenges. TXHES will work with institutions to determine the most practical transition path for each.

Current NursingCAS users will experience the most streamlined transition, as many of their existing configurations and data integrations can be carried forward into the TexNCAS environment. However, migration from NursingCAS to TexNCAS is not automatic; it requires coordination with the vendor to map existing program settings, transfer historical data where appropriate, and re-validate integrations.

Programs with proprietary systems will need to evaluate whether TexNCAS replaces, supplements, or operates alongside their existing tools. Stakeholder feedback indicated that some programs have invested significantly in internal application platforms and may need time and support to reconcile those investments with the transition to a centralized service. Programs with simpler or manual processes may find the transition operationally advantageous but will require additional training and configuration support.

13.4 Applicant Support and Navigation

Stakeholders consistently emphasized that many applicants, particularly first-generation and non-traditional students, rely heavily on personalized guidance from institutional staff to navigate the application process. A recurring concern was whether a centralized system could preserve or enhance this level of support.

The implementation plan addresses applicant support through multiple channels. The vendor provides a Help Center and applicant-facing support resources within the platform. TXHES will supplement these

with communications and outreach designed to educate applicants about TexNCAS, including its program discovery features and how to access fee assistance where applicable. Programs will retain responsibility for applicant advising and program-specific guidance, consistent with their existing practices. A key implementation activity during each phase will be to ensure that applicant-facing communications, instructions, and frequently asked questions are developed, reviewed, and available before go-live. Applicant-facing materials will be reviewed for clarity and completeness prior to launch.

13.5 TXHES Operational Staffing

TXHES will establish operational capacity to manage TexNCAS on an ongoing basis, including vendor oversight, program support, data governance, and reporting. Budget projections anticipate TXHES operational salaries, fringe benefits, operating expenses, and part-time staffing to support communications and implementation coordination. These positions will need to be recruited and onboarded early in the implementation timeline to ensure that TXHES has adequate capacity to manage Phase 1 activities and to begin planning for Phase 2.

14. Financial Considerations

14.1 Financial Strategy

The financial feasibility analysis concluded that Option 1 provides an affordable path to delivering a statewide centralized application service while still presenting several areas that require active management. These areas do not undermine feasibility; rather, they define where TXHES must exercise deliberate financial governance to ensure sustainability, affordability, and equitable participation.

Stakeholder engagement reinforced that financial questions are not secondary to implementation. They are central to whether institutions and applicants experience TexNCAS as enabling or burdensome. Nursing programs, particularly community colleges, reported limited budget flexibility, minimal staffing elasticity, and concern about layering new costs onto already constrained operations. Applicants and student representatives similarly emphasized cumulative financial barriers, particularly for first-generation and Pell-eligible populations.

The financial implementation strategy therefore focuses on four objectives:

- Maintain the affordability advantages of a configuration-based model.
- Manage long-term vendor exposure.
- Create credible mechanisms to address applicant cost concerns.
- Reduce institutional transition burden wherever possible.

14.2 Financial Exposure Scenarios

Because final terms with the vendor remain under negotiation as of the time this implementation plan was developed, exact costs cannot yet be stated. However, modeling based on anticipated participation levels and application volumes in the context of current contract negotiations allows TXHES to estimate the magnitude and timing of potential exposure.

During the first year of TexNCAS operations, vendor pricing structures may create conditions in which expenditures exceed revenues while participation ramps up. Under current participation assumptions and the terms currently under discussion as of mid-February 2026, TXHES could be

required to manage a temporary funding gap in the approximate range of \$450,000 to \$600,000. Under current assumptions in the second year of operations, the approximate funding gap is \$50K to \$150K if growth is slower than anticipated. However, under moderate participation scenarios, year-three operations could generate a positive balance in the range of \$100,000 to \$250,000. As additional institutions join TexNCAS, the probability and magnitude of negative operating positions are expected to decline.

This trajectory reflects the practical reality that system capability must be in place before full utilization occurs. Over time, financial performance may stabilize as participation broadens, processes mature, and demand patterns become more predictable.

These figures represent planning parameters derived from feasibility assumptions. They are not contractual commitments, negotiated prices, or budget requests. TXHES will refine projections once commercial terms are finalized and will incorporate updated information into formal legislative and agency budgeting processes. Continuous monitoring of participation levels, applicant demand, and institutional readiness will inform decisions regarding pacing, investment priorities, and whether supplemental funding strategies or policy adjustments are warranted.

Policy Review Triggers. TXHES recognizes that participation levels, applicant behavior, and operational demands may evolve differently than initial projections. To ensure continued alignment with legislative intent and institutional capacity, TXHES will maintain defined points at which financial and policy assumptions are reassessed. Examples of conditions that may prompt structured review include:

- Participation rates materially below planning expectations.
- Sustained gaps between revenues and expenditures beyond modeled ramp periods.
- Evidence that application fees are affecting access for priority populations.
- Documented operational strain on participating programs.
- Vendor performance limitations affecting cost or schedule.

When such conditions arise, TXHES leadership may evaluate options including pacing adjustments, revised prioritization of enhancements, alternative funding strategies, or requests for additional policy direction.

These triggers are not automatic mandates for change. They are governance mechanisms intended to ensure that emerging information leads to timely and transparent reassessment.

14.3 Vendor Financial Management and Sustainability

Under Option 1, the vendor relationship is both the source of major cost savings and the origin of several medium-rated financial risks. The platform eliminates the need for TXHES to fund core development, hosting infrastructure, and large-scale engineering staff. At the same time, the draft contract introduces fee escalation provisions, minimum application volume guarantees, and future enhancement pricing that must be actively governed.

Financial implementation therefore treats vendor management as an ongoing discipline rather than a one-time procurement activity.

TXHES will maintain visibility into application volumes, revenue flows from the vendor, and forecasted obligations throughout each admissions cycle. This monitoring function will allow leadership to anticipate whether minimum application volume commitments to the vendor are

likely to be triggered and to evaluate mitigation strategies well in advance of reconciliation periods. It also supports transparent communication with policymakers regarding fiscal exposure. During early implementation years, nursing program participation levels may not immediately generate sufficient revenue to offset fixed operating commitments. TXHES will therefore use ongoing financial monitoring to inform budget planning, pacing decisions, and any need for supplemental funding strategies until mature adoption levels are reached.

Additional enhancements that may be identified and that require statements of work represent another area requiring structured governance. Institutions have been clear that system evolution must be responsive to operational realities, yet uncoordinated customization can create uncontrolled cost growth. TXHES will therefore maintain a formal prioritization framework that evaluates enhancement requests from nursing programs based on statewide benefit, alignment with statutory objectives, operational urgency, and available financial capacity. This framework will be integrated into governance structures described elsewhere in the implementation plan.

Looking beyond initial contract years, TXHES anticipates periodic reassessment of contractual terms with the vendor. Market conditions, nursing program participation rates, and state priorities may evolve. Establishing early routines for benchmarking pricing, evaluating value realization, and documenting performance will strengthen the agency's position in future negotiations.

Future policy decisions. Several decisions will require direction from TXHES leadership or policymakers over time, including:

- Acceptable application volume thresholds for triggering shortfall payments to the vendor.
- Requests for funding discretionary enhancements requiring statements of work with the vendor.
- Approach to renegotiating revenue-sharing arrangements with the vendor in later years.
- Long-term strategy regarding vendor concentration versus diversification (e.g. alternatives to using the vendor).

14.4 Applicant Affordability and Fee Policy

Students consistently raised costs as one of the most tangible barriers in the application journey. Even when individual fees appear modest, the cumulative effect of entrance exams, transcripts, screenings, and multiple program submissions can become significant. The centralized application introduces an additional visible price point, and stakeholders are sensitive to how this may influence participation behavior.

While feasibility analysis determined that applicant-borne fees are common across all CAS models, implementation must demonstrate that TXHES has tools to mitigate hardship. TXHES will therefore treat affordability as a policy workstream parallel to technical deployment. Early implementation phases will include development of a transparent framework describing:

- Eligibility pathways for fee assistance
- How waivers or subsidies would be funded
- Documentation requirements
- Administrative processes for approval and reconciliation.

Because available vendor revenue to TXHES is limited in early years, any large-scale subsidy approach may require additional appropriations or external funding partnerships. For that reason, TXHES will begin by establishing monitoring mechanisms to understand how fees affect applicant behavior, including participation patterns among low-income and first-generation applicants.

Future policy decisions. Several decisions will require direction from TXHES leadership or policymakers over time, including:

- Whether and how to fund applicant fee assistance
- Criteria for eligibility
- Whether fee assistance is centralized or institution-managed
- Whether certain application pathways (e.g., workforce shortage regions) warrant targeted relief.

14.5 Institutional Transition Costs and Operational Burden

Although Option 1 minimizes direct institutional payments, survey feedback highlighted that the principal concern for programs is workload rather than invoices. Respondents described limited staffing elasticity, anxiety about applicant support demands, and uncertainty regarding reconciliation between CAS processes and existing institutional requirements. Implementation strategy therefore focuses on reducing friction, pacing adoption, and providing structured support.

TXHES will apply readiness-based onboarding so that institutions enter the platform when leadership commitment, staffing plans, and technical preparations are in place. This approach reflects stakeholder preference for risk reduction through phased participation rather than universal launch.

Vendor-supported onboarding, standardized training resources, and shared documentation will be supplemented by TXHES-led guidance regarding best practices and peer learning opportunities. Programs already familiar with NursingCAS will likely require less intensive support, while new participants may receive more hands-on assistance.

Wherever possible, TXHES and the vendor will seek opportunities to centralize or streamline activities that institutions identified as burdensome, such as transcript verification, subject to agreement among programs regarding acceptable standards.

Future policy decisions. Several decisions will require direction from TXHES leadership or policymakers over time, including:

- Extent to which TXHES funds or provides centralized verification services.
- Whether temporary transition grants are warranted.
- Thresholds for determining readiness.
- Expectations for parallel operations during migration.

14.6 Financial Oversight and Internal Accountability

Effective implementation requires clear responsibility within TXHES for tracking financial performance, approving expenditures, and ensuring alignment with legislative expectations. TXHES will maintain defined authority for:

- Monitoring revenue versus projections
- Approving vendor payments and enhancement commitments
- Evaluating affordability metrics
- Recommending adjustments.

Regular reporting to leadership will ensure that emerging risks are visible early and that corrective action can be taken before they become structural issues.

14.7 Continuous Financial Management

Financial governance will mature alongside the system. Early phases will emphasize uncertainty management, transition support, and establishing baseline participation. Over time, focus will shift toward optimization, value realization, and long-term sustainability. The goal is not static cost containment but informed stewardship.

Conclusion

The feasibility study demonstrated that a statewide centralized nursing application platform is both achievable and capable of delivering meaningful benefit to applicants, institutions, and the State of Texas. It also made clear that success depends on disciplined governance, realistic pacing, and sustained partnership with the programs that will operate within the system every day.

This implementation plan translates those lessons into action. It establishes defined decision authority, readiness-based participation, structured stakeholder engagement, and mechanisms for continuous improvement. It provides TXHES with practical tools to manage vendor performance, financial exposure, and operational risk while preserving institutional control over admissions policies and academic standards.

The approach is intentionally measured. Programs will join when prepared. Support will match need. Experience gained from early participation will inform expansion. Where challenges emerge, governance and CQI pathways create room to respond without destabilizing the broader system.

TexNCAS will grow and adapt as participation increases and statewide insight into the nursing education pipeline improves. With this framework in place, Texas is positioned to implement a centralized application model that enhances applicant access and transparency, strengthens the state's ability to understand and utilize available capacity, and remains responsive to the diversity of its nursing programs.