

A woman with dark hair, wearing blue scrubs and a name tag, is speaking and gesturing with her hands. She is seated at a table with a glass of water in front of her. The background is a blurred conference setting with other people and bright lights.

Nursing Summit 2019 Follow-up Survey Report

Table 37

Registered Nurse

ONL | Organization of Nurse Leaders
Advancing a culture of excellence

About ONL



Advancing a culture of health.

The Organization of Nurse Leaders - MA, RI, NH, CT, VT (ONL) is a not-for-profit, professional membership organization for current and aspiring nurse leaders. Its membership is comprised of more than 1,100 nurses from across five New England states. ONL's mission is to advance a culture of health through excellence in nursing, and works in full collaboration with all other local and national professional health care organizations to promote and optimize the nursing profession.

Executive Summary

In January 2019, ONL, together with nine other professional nursing organizations led a first-of-its-kind Nursing Summit in central Massachusetts that brought together 380 Registered Nurses to hear their concerns and feedback and enhance trust among nurses. With a robust amount of data from the Nursing Summit, ONL sought to gain further understanding and insight from Nursing Summit participants by conducting an online survey of attendees. The survey included questions about the themes that emerged during the Summit and how participants have implemented what they learned during the Summit in their organizations. One hundred and one (N=101) participants completed the survey, and many offered detailed responses. ONL is committed to an inclusive process involving many perspectives within the nursing community and is grateful to all the participants who took the survey.

Highlights from the survey included the most important ways nurses can elevate their voice within organizations, the key drivers of a healthy and productive work environment, the most meaningful ways to recognize nurses, and changes that nurses have implemented within their organizations and their teams. Survey respondents stated that they derived significant value from collaborating across different specialties and organizations to share ideas during the Nursing Summit. In this report, ONL shares ways in which nurses have made changes, big and small, in their organizations to enhance patient care delivery and the work environment. Many of the changes are focused on amplifying the voice of the nurse and improving the work environment by strengthening professional governance structures and showing appreciation for colleagues.

From the attendance and participation of nearly 400 registered nurses during the Nursing Summit and the responses of this follow-up survey, it is apparent that there is overwhelming interest and commitment from nurses to own the future success of the nursing profession.

Regardless of role, title, or specialty, there appears to be much alignment on priorities and respect for the impact nurses have within the healthcare system, and an eagerness to work together to ensure that the profession remains healthy and vibrant for the future.

The Work Environment

Many parts of the country are facing nursing workforce shortages. Therefore, many nurses may experience challenging working conditions, and organizations may experience turnover. Today, more than ever before, it is critical for nurses to have influence within their organizations and to collaborate across care settings to identify and implement strategies that enable them to deliver the highest quality patient care in a safe, healthy, and supportive work environment. In the Nursing Summit follow-up survey, we asked nurses to select their top three ideas for the most impactful ways for nurses to have a voice within their organizations, key drivers of a healthy and productive work environment, and meaningful ways to show appreciation for nurses.

Amplifying the Nurse's Voice

A key theme that surfaced repeatedly during the 2019 Nursing Summit was professional governance, and this theme continued to be top-of-mind in the survey responses. When asked to select the most impactful ways for nurses to have a voice and therefore be more influential in their organization, the top three responses were:

- **Clinical nurse participation in professional governance (shared governance)**
- **Transparent communication that is bottom-up and top-down**
- **Clinical nurse representation on organizational decision-making committees**

Professional governance enables shared decision-making, which provides nurses with greater influence in their organizations by providing the structures to facilitate the inclusion of nurses in decision-making processes. Professional governance structures also allow clinical nurses and nurse leaders to collaborate on important issues, share diverse perspectives, problem-solve, and create solutions together, which leads to an enhanced work environment and therefore increased job satisfaction for nurses.¹

Survey respondents also identified transparent communication throughout the organization as an important factor in amplifying the nurse's voice and a critical tool for effective care teams. A Summit participant shared, "The suggestion to improve communication among clinical nurses, managers, and senior management to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in key issues such as unit staffing was the most important takeaway."

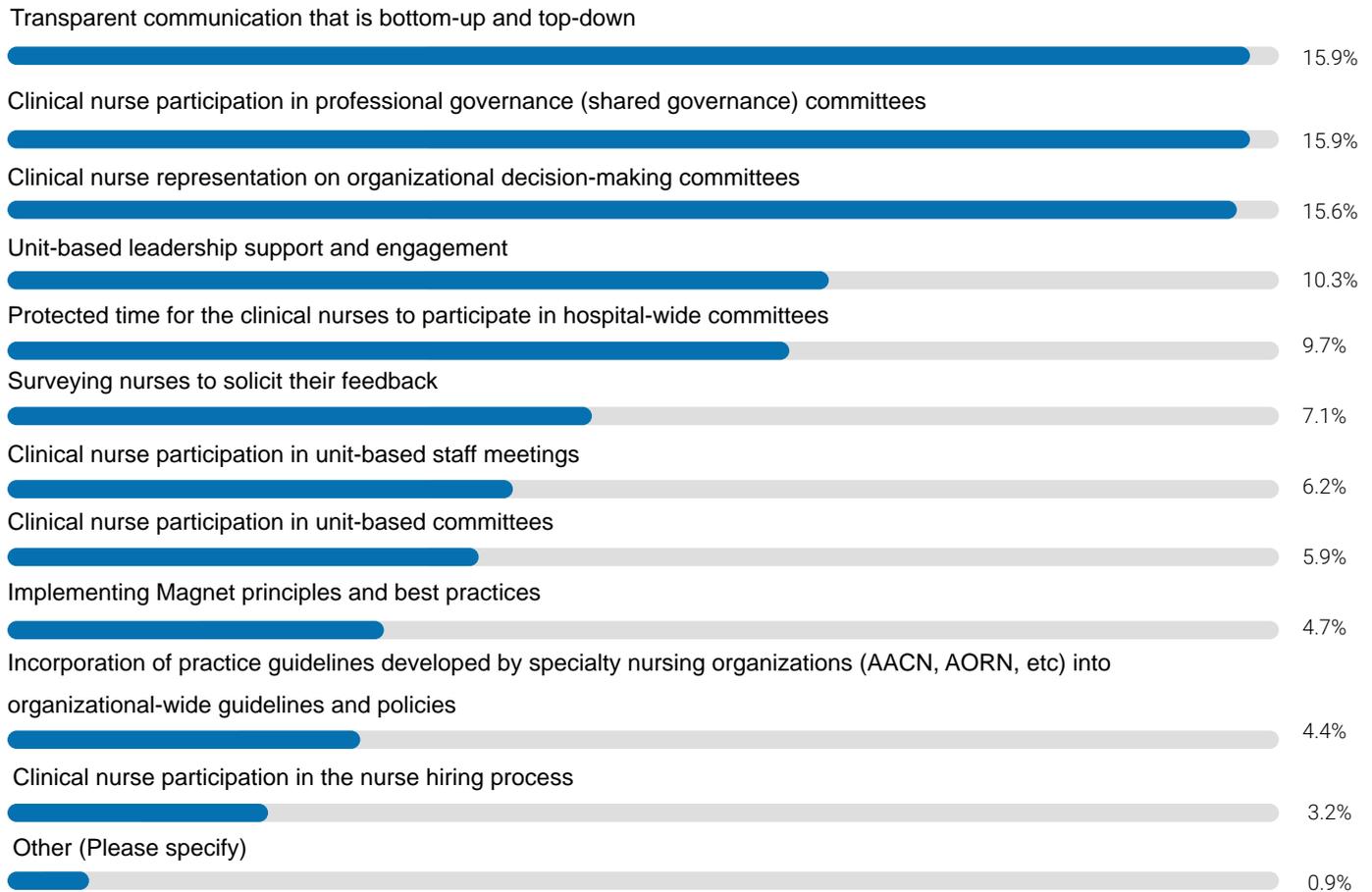


By enhancing communication across all levels of nursing—among clinical nurses, charge nurses, nurse managers, directors, and the chief nursing officer, organizations can ensure that all nurses have a say in key issues, such as nurse staffing and safety standards. As outlined during the Nursing Summit, positive communication practices include active listening, closing communication loops, following through, truth-telling, debriefs, and huddles.

¹ Kutney-Lee, Ann et al. "Nurse Engagement in Shared Governance and Patient and Nurse Outcomes." *The Journal of nursing administration* vol. 46,11 (2016): 605-612. doi:10.1097/NNA.0000000000000412

What are the most impactful ways for nurses to have a voice in their organization?

Respondents were asked to select their top three choices



Elements of a healthy work environment

A 2018 Press Ganey survey revealed that, excluding retirement, dissatisfaction with the work environment was the most commonly cited reason nurses plan to leave a current position for a different job.² Survey data from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) has shown that creating a healthy work environment enables nurses to provide the highest standards of compassionate patient care while being fulfilled at work.³ In the Nursing Summit Survey, ONL asked nurses to select their top three drivers of a healthy and productive work environment. The three most common answers were:

- **Strong teamwork with a shared vision**
- **Leaders are visible, engaged, communicate effectively and hold everyone accountable**
- **Unit culture that is supportive and respectful of all team members**

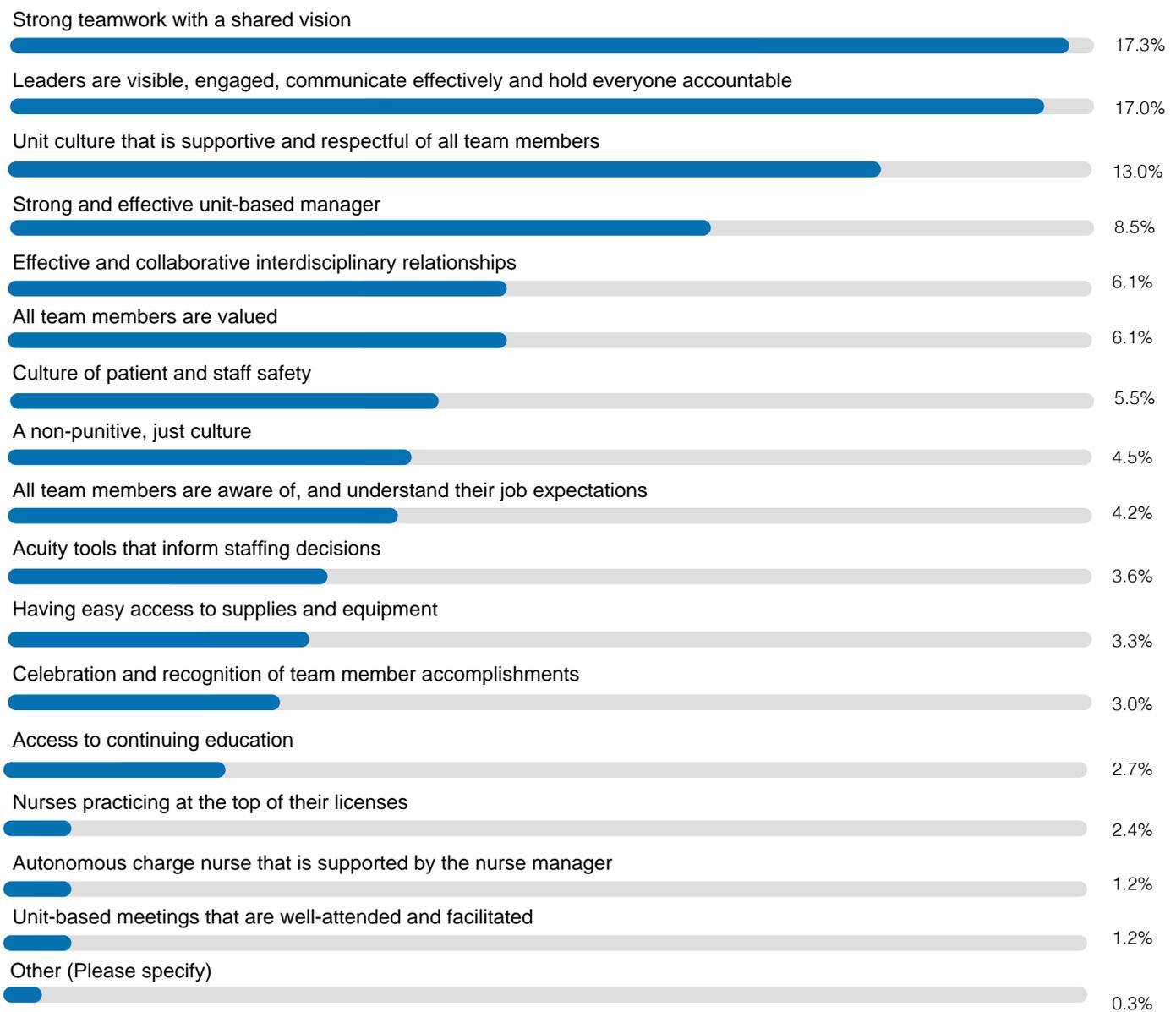
One can see from these responses that **teamwork**, **strong leadership**, and **respect** are essential to a healthy work environment that supports strong nursing practice, the delivery of high-quality patient care, and engagement in professional governance.

² "Optimizing the Nursing Workforce: Key Drivers of Intent to Stay for Newly Licensed and Experienced Nurses." 2018 Press Ganey Nursing Special Report

³ AACN

What are the key drivers of a healthy and productive work environment?

Respondents were asked to select their top three choices



Nurse Recognition

During the Nursing Summit, nurses identified recognition and appreciation as critical motivators. In the follow-up survey, ONL asked participants to select the top three ways to show appreciation for nurses. Nurses overwhelmingly selected the response *nurse representation at decision-making tables*. These data indicate that nurses feel recognized when they have a voice and when their perspectives help shape and influence unit and organizational decision-making. As one would expect, this response ties into the responses to the survey question regarding how nurses can have a stronger voice, which centered on nurse participation in professional governance and organizational decision-making committees.

In the follow-up survey results, *tuition reimbursement and school loan forgiveness* as well as *monetary incentives and bonuses* were less popular choices for ways to show appreciation for nurses. These findings indicate that organizations do not need to have large budgets to acknowledge the impact that nursing has on the organization's mission and vision. *Support for continuing education and for professional development* were among the top responses survey participants selected for ways to appreciate nurses. Budgeting for indirect time to support nurses' participation on decision-making committees, flexible scheduling, and access to professional development opportunities go a long way to recognize nurses.

Taking Action and Implementing Change

ONL has been engaging with nurses to learn how they have been able to enact change and specifically what changes they have implemented at their organizations or in their day-to-day nursing work since the Nursing Summit. In its survey, ONL asked nurses to identify the ideas or activities they have implemented since the Summit and to describe how they were able to create the changes. ONL also asked nurses to share the ideas they hope to implement in the future and what support they need to institute new measures. When asked to select all the ideas they have implemented since the Nursing Summit, 75% of respondents selected more than one idea, indicating that many nurses who participated in the Nursing Summit are highly engaged in creating change.

After attending the Nursing Summit, many nurses were inspired to implement change immediately by showing appreciation for their peers and practicing self-care. Given that nurses spend a significant amount of time caring for others, practicing self-care is of the highest importance to replenish nurses' capacity to provide compassionate, high-quality care. Self-care is intended to provide for physical, mental and spiritual well-being and can include having a healthy diet, making time for exercise and spiritual practices, getting sufficient rest, maintaining personal and family relationships, and participating in recreational and leisure activities.⁴ Nurses who practice self-care are often happier and healthier and can contribute to creating a healthy work environment.⁵ *Support for work-life harmony*, which enables nurses to practice self-care, was highly rated by survey participants as a strategy for meaningful nurse recognition.

In addition to practicing self-care, nurses also indicated that they have taken action by advocating to place nurses on organizational decision-making committees, joining a professional nursing organization, reaching out to legislators to discuss nursing practice, and committing to mentor emerging nurse leaders. Several respondents noted they are replicating the Nursing Summit on a smaller scale within their organizations to gather feedback from nurses and to share ideas on how to elevate the voice of the nurse and deliver quality patient care.

Nurses in all roles, regardless of formal titles, are leaders. Survey responses illustrate the many creative ways in which nurses are making changes in their organizations and their daily professional work. Changes are happening at all levels throughout organizations and do not necessarily involve big budgets or large amounts of time. It is important to be mindful that making change is a process, which takes vision and leadership



“As a staff and charge nurse who also creates and maintains the schedule for my unit, I am able to have direct impact upon our staffing models and have advocated for changes when necessary.”

⁴ [Code of Ethics](#) Provision 5, ANA, 2015

⁵ Crane PJ, Ward SF. Self-healing and self-care for nurses. *AORN J.* 2016;104(5):386–400.

Survey Question:

In more detail please describe the changes you were able to create in your organization and how you made the changes.

“ Encouraging faculty to become more involved with mentoring of staff at our medical center. ”

“ To address our nurse staffing, my organization has allowed us to hire more, and the float pool was expanded. It isn't perfect, but it has improved. ”

“ I encouraged peers to join Collaborative governance and I am involved in a new committee for 'well-being.' ”

“ We are looking to develop a focus group geared toward a healthy working environment. We recognized nurses with certification and added extra staff meetings for communication transparency. We are discussing creating a multidisciplinary unit-based council. ”

“ We developed a 'shout out' board for peer-to-peer recognition of a job well done. ”

“ Communication with staff regarding staffing issues and recruiting nurses and PCAs is now happening at the unit level. Communication about what the organization is doing to fill vacant positions is freely discussed and staff input is encouraged. We are thinking outside of the box. ”

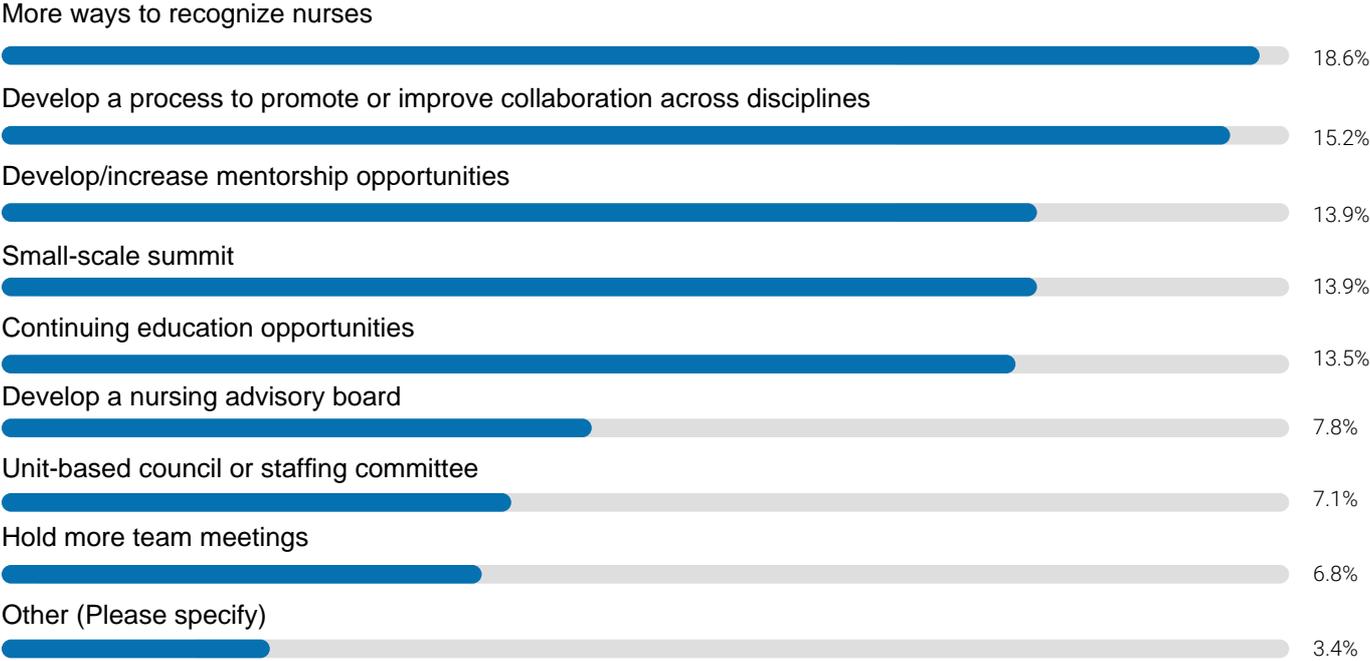
“ Creating a shared leadership committee on my unit has given my staff a voice to express their concerns. We created a program called 'Rocks in Our Shoes' where staff can identify issues big and small of concerns to be removed from the environment. ”

“ We are planning to recreate a smaller version of the Nursing Summit for our facility to empower nurses to come together, across all areas of practice, and discuss the core ideas that we share and how to implement them to empower us and provide better care for our patients and ourselves. ”

When asked about ideas they would like to implement in the future, respondents strongly supported implementing *more ways to recognize nurses* and *developing a process to promote or improve collaboration across disciplines*. Other ideas for future implementation include internal shadowing opportunities for nurses to explore new areas of practice, support for cross training opportunities, utilizing acuity-based staffing tools, providing real-time data to charge nurses and unit-based staffing committees, and collaboration across organizations.

What ideas would you like to implement at your organization in the future?

Respondents were asked to select all that apply



When asked what support participants need to enact new measures in their organizations, the main issues are **time, support from senior leadership, appropriate staffing to meet patient and unit needs, fiscal resources,** and the **engagement of staff nurses.**

Deep Dive: How the 2019 Nursing Summit Influenced Shared Governance in One Organization

An integrated health care system serving western New England shared how they've implemented change within their organization since the 2019 Nursing Summit and how they give nurses a voice through professional governance. Like many other health systems, they have been affected by the nursing shortage despite the number of nursing schools in their area.

After talking about issues of nurse retention and recruitment at the 2019 Nursing Summit, two clinical nurses at this organization initiated and are co-chairing a Recognition and Retention council. They have nursing representation from every unit and meet for one and a half hours each month. This new council creates a safe place for nurses to ask questions and receive information to bring back to their peers in their units. Two nurse managers help facilitate the council and act as sponsors and mentors to the two clinical nurses who spearheaded the council. Some councilmembers are working on rewards for nurses, some are working on recognition, and others are working on retention. Council meetings are also attended by human resources and nurse recruiters. The Council has created a Retention, Recruitment, and Recognition movement within the organization, and recruiters take the ideas from this movement to recruit nurses from the surrounding schools. As part of their work of recognizing nurses, this health system is now bringing the Daisy Award to the hospital, with the first award planned for October 2019.

The two nurses also recreated the World Café exercise from the 2019 Nursing Summit to get input from clinical nurses using three of the questions ONL asked during the Summit (see [ONL's Nursing Summit 2019 Report](#), for details on the World Café exercise). The questions focused on attracting nurses, addressing the nursing shortage in the area, and describing a healthy work culture. This exercise also provided an opportunity for nurse leaders to transparently share information about the resources that are already available at the organization. Ideas that came out of this exercise included flexible scheduling and shadowing opportunities so nurses can learn about a new unit/area, without having to leave the organization.

Reflections on the Nursing Summit

A key question in the follow-up survey asked: “What were the most important things you learned or helpful suggestions you heard during the Nursing Summit?”

Respondents indicated an important learning from the Nursing Summit was that nurses from organizations across the region share a common goal of providing quality patient care and often face similar issues. Thirty-three percent of respondents remarked on the commonality of the nursing experience across institutions and roles. As one respondent noted, “Chances are the problems that exist in your own facility are either happening or have happened in others. Sharing information with each other on how the issues are resolved and/or brainstorming on how to resolve them is important and helpful.” During the Summit, participants shared their experiences, ideas, and best practices. Nurses valued hearing different perspectives and learning how different organizations operate and what tools they use. **Participants saw the power of nurses coming together to problem-solve and empower one another to find solutions that enhance professional practice and improve patient care.**

Other learnings included:

- **Open and ongoing communication is key to making and sustaining change**
- **Clinical nurses have a desire to be involved in the change process both on the unit level and at the organizational level**
- **Nurses care about, take pride in, and feel accountable for providing high-quality, holistic care**
- **Key attributes of healthy work environments for nurses**
- **Examples of what made nurses proud of their practice**
- **Nurses’ excitement to engage in public policy issues**

“The suggestion to improve communication among clinical nurses, managers, and senior management to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in key issues such as unit staffing was the most important suggestion for my clinical practice that I heard during the Nursing Summit.”

Nurses overwhelmingly suggested that the focus of the next Nursing Summit center around structures and strategies to improve influence in decision-making.

The top three topics that respondents want addressed at the next Nursing Summit are:

- **Strategies to increase nurses' participation and impact on organizational committees**
- **How to establish or strengthen professional (shared) governance structures**
- **Committee structures that promote nurse engagement and influence in organizations**

While many organizations have made great strides in establishing committees and professional governance structures, work remains to engage staff nurses and implement organizational structures that amplify the voice of nurses.

Ninety-two percent of respondents said it is “highly likely” or “likely” that they would return for another Nursing Summit. Participants noted feeling empowered and energized after the Summit and they found great value in networking with nurses from other organizations. Hearing that nurses across organizations face many of the same challenges illuminated the need to work together and share ideas. When asked how they would like to stay engaged with the nursing community (or professional nursing organizations), seventy-three percent of respondents want to attend in-person events.

Feedback on the Nursing Summit

I was very impressed by the way that the Nursing Summit was organized, and appreciated that one's title was not at the forefront, but instead we were all equals as nurses. I really enjoyed sitting with people who I did not know—what a way to share ideas! There was so much passion about the profession. World Café was a great exercise—I liked moving around the room. I also appreciated hearing about policy and listening to the narratives. Thank you for highlighting the local nursing professional organizations, which are so important for professional growth.

Learning about the legislation and political endeavors was very interesting. Also, hearing from other hospitals having the same issues validated the needs our profession is facing, and the creative brainstorming was very inspiring.

I was so pleased to see the involvement of many nurses across the state from many places and the enthusiasm to participate. It was also great to see so many nurses at many points in their careers— especially younger participants.

The ideas each of the groups had were empowering and encouraged me to take action and be a change agent within my establishment.

There was an important message from direct care nurses that they just want to be sure their perspective is heard in real time.

It was amazing to be heard and valued. It felt great to be around so many nurses from so many areas and celebrate both the diversity of our profession, as well as the things that we all have in common.

Summits like this envision us to do more. It is easy to get stuck in the rut and do the work of today, but today, we need to also envision the work of tomorrow and put into place practices that will make those visions a reality.

There was a sense of unity at the summit. Nurses coming together like that showed that there is strength in the movement to improve the nursing profession.

Conclusion

From the attendance and participation of nearly 400 professional nurses during the Nursing Summit in January 2019 and the responses of this follow-up survey, it is evident that there is overwhelming interest and commitment from nurses to own the future success of the nursing profession.

Regardless of role, title, or specialty, there appears to be much alignment on priorities and respect for the impact nurses have within the healthcare system, and an eagerness to work together to ensure that the profession remains healthy and vibrant for the future.

ONL was pleased to learn that participants felt empowered after the Nursing Summit and that creating meaningful change has not required a large budget of money or time. Strategies discussed by attendees during the Summit inspired nurses to continue efforts to elevate nursing practice and enhance patient care across organizations.

Results from this report should inform organizational-level decisions about healthy work environments—including structures to elevate the voice of nurses, communication, leadership, and nurse recognition.



ONL is grateful to all the participants who completed the survey and for the opportunity to synthesize and share findings from both the Nursing Summit and follow-up survey. We believe that continuing to share ideas and best practices is an effective way to advance the nursing profession.

When nurses' voices are amplified and they have the opportunity to advance the dialogue across roles and organizations, they create changes that improve work environments and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to the highest possible quality care for patients.