



AONL NURSE LEADER
CORE COMPETENCIES

OVERVIEW

The AONL Nurse Leader Core Competencies provide the framework for the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with effective leadership—from first time leaders to experienced executives. The core competencies encompass the breadth and depth of the nursing leadership specialty, across health care settings and leadership roles. These competencies build on the work begun in 2004 as part of AONL’s participation in the Health Care Leadership alliance.



The anchoring domain, **Leader Within**, anchors the five core domains: **Business Skills and Principles; Communication and Relationship Building; Knowledge of the Health Care Environment; Professionalism; and Leadership**. It is the driver of motivation, beliefs, values and interests, and recognizes that the influence and significance of education, experience and understanding oneself is essential. A circle represents each core domain. The gradient border symbolizes the influence of both the art and science of nursing and the open center informs the role specific functional competencies driven by the core domain. The overlap depicts the interrelatedness of the domains in practice. The **Leadership** domain’s placement in the center supports and enables this interrelatedness of requisite knowledge, skills and abilities between and among the core domains.

Reliability and validity for the AONL Nurse Leader Core Competencies are established by periodic job analysis/role delineation studies. These competencies are based on A National Practice Analysis Study, 2022.



LEADER WITHIN

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

- Demonstrates reflective practice and an understanding that all leadership begins from within.
- Solicits feedback from trusted sources about personal strengths and opportunities for improvement, incorporating the information into practice.
- Recognizes the contribution of mental models on behavior.

FOUNDATIONAL THINKING

- Learns from challenges, setbacks and failures as well as successes.
- Recognizes the role of beliefs, values and influences in one's own method of decision-making.
- Maintains curiosity and an eagerness to explore.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Seeks coaching and mentorship from others in career planning and development.
- Develops a personal and professional career plan and measures progress.
- Recognizes and responds appropriately to career opportunities.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- Participates in life-long learning.
- Maintains competency through nationally recognized certification.
- Participates in professional organizations that advance one's leadership and career development.
- Prioritizes self-care health behaviors through daily practices and routines; practices healthy work-life integration.



PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSION ACCOUNTABILITY

- Aligns behavior with personal values and determines fit with the organization's culture.
- Ensures a just culture of accountability.
- Ensures the voice of the patient is central and present in decision-making.
- Holds self and others accountable for measurable high quality and cost-effective outcomes.
- Recognizes and responds appropriately to career opportunities for staff and colleagues.
- Exhibits executive presence.

ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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HEALTH EQUITY AND SOCIAL DETERMINATES OF HEALTH

- Implements and maintains optimal, culturally competent health care across the lifespan, in all settings, addressing social determinants of health and health equity.

GOVERNANCE

- Interacts and educates the organization's governing body regarding health care, the value of nursing, and quality and patient safety principles.
- Represents patient care issues to the organization's governing body.
- Represents nursing in the boardroom and C-suite.



COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Communicates with clarity and integrity to build trust with all stakeholders.
- Identifies and understands diverse communication styles when engaging strategic partners.
- Practices transparency and truth telling.

INFLUENCING BEHAVIORS

Influences and persuades others, builds consensus and gains cooperation from others to share information and accomplish goals.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- Develops and fosters relationships across the care continuum to build alliances and strategic partnerships to achieve common goals.
- Engages and manages conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.
- Identifies the internal and external political forces that impact the work of the organization.
- Perceives organizational and strategic realities while incorporating political influences and acts accordingly.
- Recognizes and responds to the organization's impact on stakeholders' views and engagement.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEALTH CARE ENVIRONMENT



NURSING PRACTICE AND APPLICATION

- Transforms care delivery models and environmental design to ensure the delivery of safe patient care that is evidence-based, accessible and affordable to all.
- Recognizes the impact of internal and external factors on care delivery and the organizational finances.
- Integrates quality and safety measures for patients into the care environment.
- Formulates objectives and priorities, implementing plans across the continuum of care and practice settings consistent with long-term interests of the organization.

ECONOMICS AND POLICY

- Aligns organizational strategies informed with current developments in health care economics, policy and legislation.
- Influences health care policy, at all levels of government, as it affects safe, quality, accessible and affordable health care.

REGULATION

- Ensures compliance with accreditation and local, state and federal regulatory standards.

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

- Leads/translates evidence-based research into practice.

PATIENT SAFETY AND QUALITY

- Ensures the use of patient safety and care improvement sciences.



BUSINESS SKILLS & PRINCIPLES

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Understands the organization's financial processes.
- Uses concepts of economics, cost benefit analyses and business models to set priorities and measurable goals.
- Manages financial resources using concepts of economics, finance, accounting, cost benefit analysis and effectiveness of business models.
- Supports financial health particularly as it is influenced by nursing and other clinical decisions and outcomes.
- Participates in activities related to system bond ratings, investing and attainment of operating margins.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

- Fosters high-reliability concepts within the organizational structure.
- Utilizes multiple sources of evidence-based data in goal setting and decision-making.
- Ensures operational objectives are in place to achieve the strategic mission.
- Participates in the negotiation, monitoring and management of contract/service agreements.

- Aligns and creates nursing/clinical objectives, goals and tactics required to achieve the organization's strategic outcomes.
- Recognizes and supports the benefit and impact of technology on care delivery, clinical information and financial outcomes.
- Uses evidence-based metrics to align the organization's goals and objectives with patient outcomes.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Builds and manages a diverse workforce based on organizational, professional nursing, clinical goals and outcomes, data, budget considerations and staffing needs.
- Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, on-boarded, educated, evaluated and recognized.
- Manages a multisector workforce and a variety of work situations.
- Ensures the presence of a safe and healthful work environment, promoting self-care and empowerment.
- Advances organizational policies that allow employees to practice at the top of education/license.
- Establishes mechanisms to provide identification and mentoring of staff for career progression.



LEADERSHIP

SYSTEMS AND COMPLEX ADAPTIVE THINKING

- Provides visionary thinking to build a shared vision that is articulated to others and influences others to translate vision into action.
- Develops and encourages new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches.
- Encourages new ideas and innovative designs, implements new cutting-edge programs/processes.
- Creates and executes strategies for complex situations.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- Acts as a catalyst for change by seeking new information and ideas; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions and unexpected obstacles.
- Open to change and new information.

DIVERSITY, BELONGING AND INCLUSION

- Cognizant of unconscious and systemic bias in care delivery and business operations.
- Leads and supports initiatives that address racism, discrimination and bias in care delivery and business operations.
- Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions.
- Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and maximized to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

- Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the achievement of their goals consistent with the organization's vision and mission.
- Provides feedback and opportunities for others to learn through formal and informal methods.
- Creates, promotes and protects a culture that supports staff, patients/clients and stakeholders.

DECISION MAKING

- Capitalizes on opportunities and takes calculated risks.
- Identifies and objectively analyzes problems; evaluates relevance and accuracy of information, generates and evaluates alternative solutions, makes recommendations and decisions.
- Makes timely decisions even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences.
- Understands the impact and implications of decisions.
- Delegates appropriately.
- Fosters professional governance in both philosophy and structure.

TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

- Fosters a culture of inquiry, innovation and transformation with a focus on the future.