

## *ABNS Strategies for Research Support: To Support the Conduct of Research and Promote the ABNS Research Agenda*

### **Introduction:**

The role of ABNS is to facilitate the research agenda among researchers and organizations with an interest in specialty nursing certification. For ABNS to support the conduct of research and create strategies to promote the Research Agenda for Nursing Specialty Certification, it is essential to describe potential models for research support. This document offers a brief background on the creation of our Research Agenda, and identifies a variety of methods or models to structure and support research projects as funding becomes available. The potential models are explored to determine their feasibility in terms of required infrastructure and resources.

### **Background:**

The Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI), in partnership with the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), convened a *Nursing Certification and Competency Summit* October 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland. The event brought together 87 participants who represented nursing certification organizations, affiliated credentialing agencies, testing companies and consumer advocates.

The purpose of the Summit was to obtain consensus on a unified research agenda in support of nursing certification.

### **Research Agenda**

As a result of the collaborative work done by the Summit participants, a research agenda was formed. The purpose of the research agenda is to promote research that investigates the contribution of nursing certification to health care. Through an innovative, iterative design process, the group developed and gained consensus on three overarching research priorities that serve as the framework for future research projects. The priorities are: the impact of certification on patient outcomes; continuing competence in nursing; and the health care work environment and certification.

### **Purpose:**

The Research Committee explored a variety of models that ABNS can pursue to structure the research process. Examples include: developing a competitive grants process, commissioning studies, sponsoring collaborative research among ABNS members, funding seed grants and exploratory grants to prepare researchers to obtain federal funding, partnering with a university, providing graduate nursing students with ideas for nursing certification topics to be considered for theses and dissertations, and working in partnership with existing nursing and nursing certification foundations.

### **Strategies – Models for Research Support:**

Competitive programs – a common method for supporting research is to launch a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Applications (RFA) that announces the availability of grant funding for a specific purpose. An RFP requests proposals on a particular topic or topics from an open field of researchers. An RFA asks researchers to devise the topics as a way to open the field of ideas. The competitive grant program establishes eligibility requirements, funding levels, submission requirements, and review and award criteria..

The grant program can be structured in a variety of ways and could support new researchers, provide seed money for pilot projects, focus on methodology to devise alternative ways to measure variables, fund exploratory grants to prepare researchers to obtain federal or larger foundation funding and/or provide needed matching funds.

(Examples include: ONS small grants programs [www.ons.org/Awards/FoundationAwards](http://www.ons.org/Awards/FoundationAwards); National Palliative Care Research Center [www.npcrc.org/program/program\\_list.htm?cat\\_id=1234](http://www.npcrc.org/program/program_list.htm?cat_id=1234); AACN grants [www.aacn.org/wd/practice/content/grant-large.pcms?menu=practice](http://www.aacn.org/wd/practice/content/grant-large.pcms?menu=practice))

Commissioned studies – commissioned research projects can be solicited by ABNS based on the research agenda priorities. Commissioning a study will enable ABNS to specifically address the research agenda priorities (versus an open competitive process that may not elicit a specific type of study). A Commissioned Study essentially restricts the research topic and restricts the field of researchers. A fair, accountable and transparent commissioning process must be developed to solicit, review, award and manage the commissioned proposals. (A reference source for more information is the Social Research Association, *Commissioning Social Research – a good practice guide*, 2002 /[www.the-sra.org.uk/documents/pdfs/commissioning.pdf](http://www.the-sra.org.uk/documents/pdfs/commissioning.pdf))

Sponsor collaborative research projects among ABNS members – ABNS has successfully undertaken a collaborative research project among its member organizations with the 2005 Value of Certified Nursing study. In this model, ABNS coordinates the research project and member organizations choose to participate. With the Value study, ABNS member organizations solicited participants from among their certificants to complete an electronic survey. Data analyses were conducted by Castle Worldwide. In addition to receiving aggregated responses from the entire study, participating organizations were provided with aggregated findings from their organizations' participants.

Link with Faculty Researchers – ABNS may wish to establish research alliances with schools of nursing or faculty researchers to focus on nursing certification research.

Provide graduate nursing students with ideas for nursing certification topics to be considered for theses and dissertations – ABNS has established a comprehensive bibliography of nursing certification literature. The bibliography, Research Agenda priorities, and Research Committee mentors can be offered to schools of nursing to stimulate interest in nursing certification research topics.

Work in partnership with existing nursing and certification organizations and foundations – ABNS can fund a grant or support collaborative research with an established research program.

For example, ABNS is currently participating in an ICE Research Committee Task Force investigating the value of certification. ABNS can partner with other organizations and foundations to host a research grant, which can result in more funding (a larger grant) being made available. Another example is a strategy where ABNS can fund the funders and allow the grant funder to then facilitate the process of awarding research funding.

Dissertation Award – work with the ABNS Awards and Recognition Committee to host a monetary award for a doctoral candidate conducting dissertation research on a certification topic that addresses the research agenda.