



**National Council for
State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements**

Strategic Plan Executive Summary

Approved May 6, 2020

National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) contracted with Brainard Strategy beginning in October 2019 to create an inaugural strategic plan for NC-SARA. An NC-SARA Strategic Planning Steering Committee (the Committee) was established comprising the Executive Committee of the Board and NC-SARA senior staff. The following key themes for Committee consideration emerged from an environmental scan: NC-SARA's long-term strategic objectives should be to establish a solid brand, focus on the maturation of the organization, develop a communication strategy, create a consistent and cohesive message, and measure outreach to its constituents. NC-SARA is recognized as a unique resource -- a state-based national solution for decreasing regulatory burden and enhancing consumer protection. The principal activities to achieve these objectives are the discipline to stay focused on the objectives and actions detailed in the strategic plan, development of a communication strategy and related marketing campaigns, and implementing more extensive training programs.

The Committee developed a three-year plan with the following strategic objectives:

Strategic Objective 1: Develop and communicate a clear, compelling message to constituents regarding the value proposition of NC-SARA

1. Training
 - a) All NC-SARA stakeholders understand the value proposition of NC-SARA
2. Engagement
 - a) NC-SARA Board members engaged their relationships and their knowledge to advance the objectives of NC-SARA
 - b) NC-SARA Board members make the strategic plan a regular agenda item
3. Awareness
 - a) Students are satisfied with their ability to access quality distance education programs from institutions participating in the SARA process
 - b) Stakeholders have sustained understanding of the value of NC-SARA to students, states, and institutions
 - c) The media recognizes NC-SARA as the organization that sets national standards for interstate distance education

Strategic Objective 2: Employ NC-SARA's broad collaborative relationships with accreditors, states, and institutions to promote improvements in access to, and quality of distance education programs

1. Training
 - a) All SARA regional compact staff, State Portal Entity staff, and SARA-participating institution staff understand and correctly apply all SARA policies
 - b) State Portal Entity staff are provided clear and comprehensive information about demonstrated best practices in postsecondary education oversight and regulation
 - c) SARA regional compact staff and State Portal Entity staff are cross-trained

- d) Educate students about:
 - The consumer protection and quality assurance that NC-SARA provides;
 - The program catalog; and
 - The value of accreditation
- 2. Collaborate with stakeholders to improve and expand services
 - a) Create quality, user-friendly data reports for states
 - b) Provide training for institutions and states in understanding and complying with SARA requirements

Strategic Objective 3: Achieve operational excellence

- 1. Staff Development:
 - a) Ensure staff are trained to gain key skills and competencies needed by the organization
 - b) Hire additional staff, permanent and temporary, to support senior staff and continue to ensure accounting needs are met through an appropriate balance of internal staff and consultants
- 2. System Strategy:
 - a) Ensure sufficient and up-to-date technology systems and services are in place
 - b) Hire appropriate technology consultants as needed
 - c) Make use of project management discipline to manage workloads for all staff

Strategic Objective 4: Continuously strengthen the partnership with regional compacts and states to seamlessly align and deliver value

- 1. Collaborate with compacts to determine agreed-upon roles and responsibilities with NC-SARA
- 2. Collaborate with states to determine agreed-upon roles and responsibilities with NC-SARA