National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

NICE International progress update

This report gives details of NICE International's progress for the financial year 2020/21, providing an overview of achievements and the pipeline and ambition for the programme for the 2021/22 financial year.

The Board is asked to review and comment on the progress and future aspirations of NICE International.

Meindert Boysen

Director, Centre for Health Technology Evaluation

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Introduction

The mission of NICE International is to support countries to improve their nation's health and wellbeing by sharing best practice and expertise from NICE, and to gain learnings and initiate international collaborations that help to shape our work at NICE. We do this by offering services to help drive improvements in health and care decision-making, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and UK global health ambitions.

Our service offering is aimed at supporting international organisations, ministries, and government agencies whose task is to improve evidence-based decision making in health and social care in their context. We aim to work collaboratively with other system partners, strategic partners, and stakeholders nationally and internationally to deliver our service offering and engage with influencers and funders to support and promote our work.

Since the official relaunch of NICE International in November 2019, the team has grown its presence in the global health space and expanded its service offering, transitioning from services almost exclusively focused on knowledge sharing activities to include more supportive consultancy-type advisory engagements. Our current service offering, including a list of topic areas, is detailed in appendix 1.

Through establishing significant relationships with overseas organisations, government agencies and UK partners, NICE International has contributed to enhancing NICE's reputation worldwide and is keen to further contribute to NICE-wide strategic priorities and support NICE's ambitions.

NICE International has also provided learning opportunities and intelligence for NICE, fostering internal and external collaboration and new relationships. Importantly, NICE International has also provided NICE staff the opportunity to enhance their skills through collaboration on international projects, contributing to their ambitions, motivation, and satisfaction, while celebrating diversity and inclusivity. This aims to contribute to NICE’s transformational people strategy.

This paper summarises the progress made in the financial year 2020/21 and the projections for the financial year 2021/22 in line with the NICE Business plan objective 'to grow NICE International to allow an increased number of international consultancy projects to be delivered'.

The launch of the NICE Strategy 2021-2026 and the UK and global health context in which more attention is being placed on international collaboration has motivated the NICE International team to start developing an international strategic plan. This plan will detail NICE International's mission, vision and strategic ambitions, and how these align and contribute to NICE's strategic pillars. This plan is currently under development and will be presented to the Board in the future.

This plan will aim to allow for internal alignment on the future role and direction of NICE International, to share our strategic ambitions for NICE International with our partner organisations in the system and to pay particular attention to priority areas of the world to work with and any priority topics of interest based on NICE's strategic ambitions.

NICE International progress update

International enquiries and delivered engagements

NICE International received a total of 85 enquiries in the financial year 2020/21. Figure 1 shows that the number of enquires received by NICE International has dipped in the last 12 months, most likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some of these enquiries are related to longer term consultancy projects.

Figure 1: total number of enquiries to NICE International by financial year and quarter

In 2020/21, NICE International delivered a total of 52 international engagements. Of these, 34 were fee-based projects and the remaining 18 were considered business development or of an introductory or strategic nature and therefore did not generate income.

Figure 2: Number of delivered engagements by region in 2020/21

Figure 2 presents the number of delivered engagements by world region in 2020/21. These engagements spanned across 24 different countries, mostly from those countries and contacts through which we already had established relationships, including Latin American countries like Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay and Mexico, and relationships established through the Better Health Programme work in the Philippines and South Africa.

Figure 3: Word cloud of topic areas of focus for delivered engagements



Figure 3 presents a word cloud of the topic areas covered in the delivered engagements. The most requested topic area to cover was around health technology assessment which featured in more than 70% of engagements, followed by introduction to NICE (30%), patient and public involvement (19%), NICE International (17%) and guidelines (17%).

Table 1: Number of delivered engagements by financial year and service type

| Service type | 2019/20 No. of delivered engagements  (income generating) | 2020/21  No. of delivered engagements  (income generating) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Meetings | 19 (0) | 5 (1) |
| Speaking engagements | 11 (4) | 19 (8) |
| Seminars/webinars | 20 (20) | 16 (13) |
| Consultancy | 8 (8) | 12 (12) |
| Total | 60 (32) | 52 (34) |

Table 1 presents the number and type of engagements that have taken place in 2020/21. The data for 2019/20 financial year is presented as a comparison. Seminars keep being a valued service offering from international organisations who can get a greater understanding of issues of interest based on NICE's experience and a collaborative discussion with NICE. However, some international organisations are keen to get a deeper understanding into an issue or challenge, and jointly analyse and discuss it with NICE. There is also demand for getting practical advice and review of plans and outputs based on NICE’s expertise, and for receiving technical training and support from NICE and different experts. This is covered within NICE International consultancy service offering and allows NICE to establish longer-term partnerships with the organisations demanding these services.

Despite the slow start to the year, likely as a result of the pandemic, NICE International was able to adapt to the 'new normal', further supported by the increasing acceptance worldwide of remote working. However, services have been affected by the impact that the pandemic has had, and continues to have, in many of the countries we have engaged with.

Some key highlights of our engagement work in 2020/21 include:

* 1. Substantial input and participation in the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) Better Health Programme (BHP), providing support to the programme at a strategic level by being part of the steering group alongside the Department of Health and Social Care and other executive agencies and arm's length bodies, and supporting the programme at a technical level by providing direct technical advice and input as part of the consortium technical advisory service. For the 2020/21 financial year, NICE has provided 290 hours of technical support to the programme, being the 3rd organisation who has contributed most to the programme.
  2. Providing an important technical exchange for HTA capacity building for the HTA unit (Department of Health), HTA council (decision making committee) and local government units in the Philippines through the FCDO Better Health Programme (BHP) funded activities. NICE's contribution, led by NICE International, was recognised in the [Department of Health (DOH) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Philippines Annual Report](https://doh.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=63e73026f066f1ad5a8ae2123&id=a0e305b6c6&e=3854040987), and by the UK Government through the British Embassy in Manila as 'one of the strongest system-to-system linkages that has been enabled by the [Better Health] programme and has contributed much to our wider health diplomacy work'.
  3. A third series of multi-country seminars in Latin America on HTA in Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay funded by the Department for International Trade. Feedback from attendees was extremely positive, highlighting not only the quality of the content but also the way it was delivered. NICE International was praised by our 'readiness to adapt and anticipate inputs during the event, enabling the discussion towards constructive strategies to address the challenges in each of the healthcare systems'.
  4. A knowledge exchange on HTA, guidelines, real world evidence and quality standards and indicators with the Colombian Instituto de Evaluacion Tecnologica en Salud (IETS) under the umbrella of our Memorandum of Understanding and funded by the Department for International Trade, and participation in IETS 10th anniversary event and launch of their public involvement manual.
  5. Initial high-level conversations with the Cyprus Health Insurance Organisation for a consultancy project in developing, contextualising, and implementing clinical guidelines and quality indicators in Cyprus. This project is now underway.
  6. Continued collaboration with the Danish Medicines Council in supporting their changes to their methods for HTA through a peer-to-peer seminar on committee decision making to its HTA council members
  7. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health-hosted event to celebrate NICE International's 1st anniversary since its re-launch in November 2019
  8. Representing NICE as an official partner in the launch of first World Evidence Based Healthcare Day on 20th October 2020. This is a global campaign with a view to raising awareness of the need for better evidence to inform healthcare policy, practice and decision making to improve health outcomes globally. In its inaugural year, the World EBHC Day campaign Evidence to Impact asked the global evidence community to reflect and share experiences of using evidence to generate impact in healthcare globally. We worked with other teams at NICE to organise some of the activities and communications required to make this event a success, through promoting and organising the submission of impact stories, webinars, podcasts, and infographics, with statistics from the day showing it reached to 98 countries, with over 20,000 social media interactions.

NICE International has been engaging with other system partners in developing vehicles for collaborative working and to minimise duplication of efforts. This is evident in our work with the:

* 1. NHS export collaborative, led by Healthcare UK: programme announced in the NHS Long Term Plan to help the NHS access a higher share of international commercial income by convening organisations, brokering deals, and potentially acting as a prime contractor. NICE International has been heavily involved in the development of the export collaborative initiative, attending several workshops and focus groups to provide input in the shape of the programme.
  2. NHS Consortium for Global Health: After two years of operation as the NHS Consortium supporting the Better Health Programme, a consortium of UK healthcare organisations managed through the NHS Joint Unit secretariat based within Health Education England and Public Health England, the group is working on a think-piece on the technical expertise which can be harnessed through the NHS Consortium for supporting global health opportunities. NICE International represents NICE in this consortium.
  3. Academic Health Science Networks and the Royal College for Obstetricians and Gynaecology to work in partnership on international projects within the collaboration agreements between NICE and these organisations.

NICE International has taken up opportunities to showcase our work and the work of our international partners, inspired by our collaborations internally and externally, and to identify areas at NICE that would benefit from our international learnings. Some examples include:

* 1. Organising a technical forum to bring learnings to NICE on the experience of the HTA Unit in the Philippines in conducting rapid appraisals for COVID-19 technologies. This led to further conversations between the COVID-19 rapid guidelines team and the team in the Department of Health in the Philippines around potential collaboration in the surveillance and update of COVID-19 rapid guidelines.
  2. Supporting the SP&R team to organise a roundtable jointly with ISPOR on child health-related quality of life, helping to organise an international workshop on interim access to health technologies alongside SP&R, NHS England and the NICE Commercial and Managed Access Team.
  3. Sharing links and insights on international projects, collaborations and initiatives to the health inequalities working group, the leads on sustainability and the data & analytics team. In the future this will be done in a more coordinated manner through the set-up of an internal international group.
  4. Attending and presenting at relevant international conferences including the ISPOR Asia Pacific 2020 on the use of real-world evidence in HTA, and THET's 2020 Annual Conference on our experience in Latin America and the Caribbean on implementing HTA through a collaborative approach between stakeholders.

NICE International has also supported several engagements linked to the global effort in tackling COVID-19 including:

* 1. a webinar for international stakeholders on NICE's response to the pandemic in May 2020
  2. sharing insights from our experience dealing with COVID-19, particularly around the development of rapid guidelines and RAPID C-19 with countries including the Philippines (as part of the FCDO Better Health Programme), Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and Slovakia as part of their engagements, and sharing our COVID-19 products with India amid the recent outbreak in the country.

The year 2020/21 has also seen an effort to develop our marketing and communications strategy through an internal comms drive, the redesign of our webpages, the procurement of an animation to describe our role, and through audience insight exercises to inform the future direction and understand wider perceptions of NICE International.

People and Resources

Financial and HR plans to support NICE International strategy

NICE International is located within the NICE Scientific Advice team, as a not-for-profit, cost-recovery team. Staff supporting NICE International also participate in NICE Scientific Advice projects. The co-location of both teams allows for re-deployment of staff to NICE Scientific Advice if demand for international services declines unexpectedly, without posing a risk to NICE. NICE International is working on the trigger and decision points in which this re-deployment will be implemented in the 2021/22 financial year under different scenarios.

The NICE Business plan 2021/22 states that we will aim to grow NICE International to allow an increased number of international consultancy projects to be delivered.

To support this initial expansion, the NICE Scientific Advice and NICE International Oversight group approved the recruitment of one 8b technical role and one 8d Associate Director post for NICE International.

NICE International will aim to recover the costs of its advisory role when working with international organisations and sharing NICE’s learnings and expertise. When working with low- and middle-income countries that may not have the ability to cover the cost-recovery fees, NICE International will explore alternative funding models through actively looking for funding opportunities, for example participating in Official Development Assistance funded projects and providing support to international organisations aiming to obtain third party funding. We will do this with support from the new business development team in the Finance, Strategy and Transformation directorate.

Some of NICE International's activities, such as support activities for NICE, strategic coordination and intelligence gathering do not generate any income, and therefore require additional financial support from NICE. As NICE International is still developing and is in the early stages of its strategy, it is difficult at this stage to accurately estimate how much resource will be required to support this strategic role going forward.

Financial position

The net outturn for 2020/21 was a deficit of £20,000. NICE International was asked to pause the signing of new contracts and organising international engagements between January and April due to the internal reprioritisation of work due to the impact of COVID-19. This led to a postponement of at least 1 project and the cancellation and amendment of 4 engagements. The deficit made by NICE International in the 2020/21 financial year was offset by the NICE Scientific Advice surplus.

In 2021/22 the team is expanding. The 2 new posts recognised prior year ending, will increase the running costs of the team. There will be lag-time before the new posts result in an increase in income. The income generated is also expected to increase, with predicted income of £170,000 based on current pipeline projections for each type of engagement. The increase in income is expected to be driven by an increased number of consultancy projects. However, it is acknowledged that COVID-19 is still having an impact on the demand from international organisations for different services, which may affect our predictions at this stage. We will continue carefully reviewing and assessing the risks, planning and acting accordingly.

The NICE International team will support NICE activities in terms of international coordination and intelligence gathering that will not generate income in the short-term. These activities contribute to a projected deficit of £46,000. These activities will include:

* 1. Further development and maintenance of the NICE-wide Strategic International Engagement plan (SIEP), to coordinate and drive international engagement across the institute.
  2. The initiation, coordination and chairing of a new internal advisory group, to coordinate and drive NICE’s international engagements and efforts across the organisation, aligning them with NICE’s priority areas, and a new external advisory group to provide strategic advice, direction and guidance on NICE’s international engagements.
  3. Representing NICE at various external international group meetings and events including special interest groups, DHSC/ALB NHS international groups, and events such as World Evidence Based Healthcare (EBHC) day.
  4. Liaison and coordination between internal teams on a 1-to-1 basis to share intelligence and provide briefings on NICE's international engagements with international organisations or countries ahead of other important engagements.
  5. Working strategically with the scientific affairs team in the Science, Evidence and Analytics team on NICE's strategic priorities internationally.
  6. Providing coordination support to other no-fee strategic engagements.

The resources required to support this coordination and intelligence gathering role will be monitored over the next 12 months for a more accurate estimate to be provided for subsequent financial years. It is anticipated that the proportion of costs that are not recoverable from income generation will decrease in future years as the number of paid projects increases. Working with the NICE Finance, Strategy & Transformation directorate, we will explore various financial business models over the coming year focusing on the long-term sustainability of the team.

Next steps

NICE International are working on developing a longer-term strategy that we aim to present to the Board later this year.

Conclusion

This paper contains an update to the Board on the progress of NICE International in the financial year 2020/21, providing an overview of achievements and developments during the last 12 months, and the pipeline and future aspirations of the team for the financial year 2021/22.

Issues for consideration

Note the progress of NICE International in the financial year 2020/21

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