General FAQs

Applicant FAQs

General FAQs:

1. Who can apply?

Local WIC Agencies, as designated on WIC Local Agency Directory Report Form FNS–648, operating a peer counseling program for at least one year, meeting all of the core components of the FNS Loving Support© Model for a Successful Peer Counseling Program.

2. Where do I find the information to apply?

You can find important dates, applications and instructions on the **Loving Support Award of Excellence Program** website.

3. Do I have to complete the application all in one setting?

You must download and save the application to your computer before entering any information. Any work completed on the application prior to being downloaded and saved may be lost. Submit the application when you are ready. However, the application period closes after 60 days. It is suggested that you submit as early as possible in the 60 day period.

4. How can I tell if my application was received?

Applications are submitted electronically via Hightail secure file upload. An email confirmation of receipt is provided.

5. Will I be able to see the status of my application during the evaluation process?

The evaluations are completed in a closed system and applicants will not be able to view the status while the evaluation period is open. Awardees will be notified when the full evaluation period is complete.

6. Why are there 3 awards?

This approach allows FNS to recognize agencies that are demonstrating model practices, as well as those who are at varying stages of implementing exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support practices.

7. When will the awardees be announced?

The awards are expected to be announced during World Breastfeeding Week.

8. Can I apply for a higher level award every year?

The awards will be valid for a 4 year period; however an agency may apply for an award of higher achievement each year.

9. Who can I contact if I need technical assistance with submitting the completed application and supporting documents?

Prior to making inquiries please review all FAQ's, Application Instructions, and the PowerPoint "Application Assistance for Local WIC Agencies" which was sent via email by your State Agency. Questions can be sent to **WICHQ-SFPD@fns.usda.gov** (link sends e-mail) .

10. Do I need any special software on my computer?

Applicants will need to either Adobe Reader software or Microsoft Word to fill in the application form. Adobe Reader can be **downloaded**(link is external) free.

11. How can I change a Word document into a PDF file?

In the opened document, go to File-> Save As. Under the text box File Name, click on the drop down menu Save as Type and choose PDF. Next click Save and the Word document will be converted to a PDF file ready for submission.

12. Do I have to download the application onto my computer?

Yes. Many browsers have their own built in PDF readers; however, the fillable PDFs will NOT be able to be saved if data is entered on the browser. The application needs to be saved to a computer first and then opened with Adobe Reader to save your application responses.

Applicants FAQs:

1. Can I submit a paper application?

Electronic submission via Hightail is the only method to submit completed applications and supporting documentation.

2. Do I need to complete all of the questions to be eligible for an award?

To be considered for the Gold Award, all 30 questions in the Gold award application must be answered "yes". To be considered for a Gold Premiere award, responses to all 16 questions in the combined Gold Premiere and Gold Elite application are not required; however, minimum criteria in each section of the application must be met. Please see the application instructions for the combined Gold Premiere and Gold Elite application for criteria required in each section for the Gold Premiere award. To receive the highest award, the Gold Elite award, all the questions must be answered appropriately for both applications. Performance data will also be used to determine Gold Premiere and Gold Elite Awards.

3. Who submits the local WIC agency performance data?

The performance data is submitted by the evaluators, not the applicant.

4. How will I know what performance data will be used for my Gold Premiere or Gold Elite award application?

Evaluators will use the most recent data posted on the **FNS website**. The performance data used is based on the local WIC agency program participant data for fully breastfed infant food package participation, expressed as a percentage of total infant participants in each local agency obtained from the annual data already submitted to FNS annually.

5. How are the percentages of the fully breastfed infants at the local agencies determined?

Infant data entered and analyzed in the Breastfeeding Data Local Agency (BFDLA) Report is obtained from State Agency latest closeout FNS-798. Therefore, an infant is identified in the participant category using the same instructions listed while completing the FNS-798:

• <u>Infants Fully Breastfed</u> - Breastfed infants whose mothers received WIC food instruments or food designed for issuance to fully breastfeeding women for the month. Fully breastfed infants receive no food package through age 5 months; at 6 months of age they receive the fully breastfed infant food package.

• <u>Infants Partially Breastfed</u> - Breastfed infants who received at least one WIC food instrument or food designed for either partially or fully formula fed infants for the month.

• <u>Infants Fully Formula-Fed</u> - Infants who are not being breastfed by their mothers and who received at least one WIC food instrument or food for the month.

Rates are displayed as a percent of all participating fully breastfeed infants divided by all participating infants to determine the highest breastfeeding rates.

6. Can I send additional attachments after my completed application is submitted?

No. At the time of submission, the completed application(s) and all supporting documentation must be uploaded via **Hightail Secure Uploads (link is external)**.

7. How should I submit materials if my IT department does not allow access to Hightail?

In situations when Hightail is blocked by your IT department, please contact WICHQ-SFPD@fns.usda.gov for further instructions.

8. Is there a preference to a file extension of the uploaded documents?

Adobe PDF files (.pdf) are highly encouraged. However, Word documents (.doc and .docx) are acceptable file extensions.

9. The application mentions that Narratives cannot exceed 500 words. Does the same word limit apply to Supporting Documentation?

No. Please refer to the specific instructions in the application instructions on supporting documentation.

10. Can State policies be used for documentation?

Local agencies should only submit sections of the State policy that pertain to the question, as submitting the entire state manual would be cumbersome for evaluation. As stated in the documentation section of the Application Instructions, "Supportive documentation refers to documents

that already exist. An example may be, but is not limited to, a policy or procedure from the state manual that your local agency follows or a locally developed MOU…"

11. If my agency was not recommended for an award, will I be able to see the justification/comments?

Yes. Your State WIC agency will have the results of all applicants in their State.

12. Will small agencies have the same probability of receiving an award as large agencies?

Yes. The evaluation criteria of the awards are not based on the size of the local agency.

13. My agency has received a Gold award within the past 4 years. Does my Local Agency have to resubmit a Gold application to apply for a higher award (Gold Premiere or Gold Elite)?

Yes. Once the Gold Application is downloaded and saved, please follow the Gold Application Instructions to complete the coversheet, prescreening section, and Gold Award Application Checklist prior to applying for a higher award.

14. If I apply for the Gold Elite (highest level) award but do not qualify, what happens to my application?

You would be evaluated on the highest level award that you are eligible. If you apply for a Gold Elite award and it is determined that your application is not eligible for the Gold Elite award based on your answers or documentation, your application would then be evaluated for eligibility for the other award levels, the Gold Premiere or Gold award.