

General FAQs:**1. Who can apply?**

Local WIC Agencies operating a peer counseling program for at least one year, meeting all of the core components of the [WIC Breastfeeding Model for Peer Counseling](#). Local agencies that have more than one location or clinic should collaborate together to submit one application for the Local agency application.

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

Yes. The evaluation criteria of the awards are based on the quality of services provided and is not based on the size of the local agency.

3. 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.

4. 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.

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

An agency may apply for an award of higher achievement within a 4 year period.

6. When does the 4 year period officially start and end on?

The Loving Support Award of Excellence is valid for a 4 year period starting with the year that the local agency receives the award. For example, if a WIC local agency received their award in August 2015, the award period would be FY2015, FY2016, FY2017 and FY2018. They would be eligible to apply for the award again in FY19.

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

Applicants will need Adobe Reader software to fill in the application form. Adobe Reader can be [downloaded \(link is external\)](#) free.

8. 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.

9. 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.

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

Supportive documentation does not have an upper word limit, but be concise and direct in your responses. Please refer to the specific instructions in the Application Instructions on supporting documentation. *It is NOT acceptable to submit entire policy and procedure manuals*; please select the documents that best support your response.

11. Can State or Federal policies be used for documentation?

Local agencies are highly encouraged to highlight their local policies. Local agencies should only submit sections of State and Federal policies that pertain to the question. Do not submit entire manuals. As stated in the documentation section of the Application Instructions, "Supportive documentation refers to documents that already exist. The preferred source of documentation are locally developed policies, procedures, MOU's, etc.; however, State and Federal documentation is also acceptable."

12. Who submits the local WIC agency performance data for the Premiere or Elite applications?

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

13. How do I package my application for submission?

Please combine/compress all of your documents into one .zip file, and name the zip file to indicate your WIC agency (e.g. 'Clay County Gold Application'). Supportive documentation and narratives can be submitted as Adobe PDF files (.pdf) or Word documents (.doc and .docx). However Adobe PDF files (.pdf) are highly encouraged. Follow these instructions to create a zip file: [Windows \(link is external\)](#)
[Mac \(link is external\)](#)

14. How do I submit an application?

Electronic submission via [Hightail Secure Uploads \(link is external\)](#) is the only method to submit completed applications and supporting documentation.

- 15. 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 email your materials with the subject as “[local agency name] LSA Application” to [WIC Works](#).
- 16. 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 \(link is external\)](#).
- 17. 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.
- 18. Who can I contact if I need technical assistance with submitting the completed application and supporting documents?**
Your State Agency can answer questions about the application. 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. The State Agency should be included on emails between local agencies and the [WIC National Office \(link sends e-mail\)](#) for further clarification and technical assistance.
- 19. 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 by late summer when the full evaluation period is complete.
- 20. When will the awardees be announced?**
The awards are expected to be announced during Breastfeeding Month in August.
- 21. If my agency was not recommended for an award, will I be able to see the justification/comments?**
Yes. After Breastfeeding Month in August, your State WIC agency will have the results of all applicants in their State. If you have not received comments, please contact you State Agency.

Application FAQs:

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

All 30 questions in the Gold award application must be answered “yes” to be considered for the Gold award. To be considered for a Premiere award, responses to all 16 questions in the combined Premiere/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 Premiere/Elite application for criteria required in each section for the Premiere award. To receive the highest award, the Elite award, all the questions must be answered appropriately for both applications. Performance data will also be used to determine Premiere and Elite Awards.

23. How will I know what performance data will be used for my Premiere or 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.

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

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

Infants Fully Breastfed - 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.

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

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

25. 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 (Premiere or Elite)?

Yes. Once the Gold Application is downloaded and saved, please follow the Gold Application Instructions for Past Awardees. You will only have to complete the Application coversheet, prescreening section, Gold Award Application Checklist, and Verification Page prior to applying for a higher award. *Past awardees with a valid certificate should not attach additional documentation to the Gold Application when applying for a higher award unless the certificate expires in the current year.*

26. 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 Premiere or Gold award.

27. Which areas of the application do applicants have the most difficulty?

The most common errors that disqualify applicants:

- a. Attaching documentation (policies and procedures) that does not meet all criteria for a particular question. Make sure you follow the Application Instructions to ensure you are addressing all criteria and be thorough on narratives.
- b. Using previous versions of the application. Download and use the latest materials posted onto the FNS public website.
- c. Breastfeeding performance data lower than required (for the Premiere and Elite). Please check your breastfeeding rates via the WIC Breastfeeding Data Local Agency Report: [Loving Support Award of Excellence Program](#)

28. I have a valid Gold award that will expire this year. Can I submit the Gold Application for Past awardees when I apply for a higher award?

The intent of the shortened Gold Application for Past Awardees is to streamline the application for a higher award, Premiere and Elite. If your agency received an award that will expire the current application year, it is suggested to submit the entire Gold application with the associated supportive documentation and narratives. Otherwise, there is a possibility of not receiving a new certificate if your agency completed the Gold Application for Past Awardees and did not meeting the criteria for a higher award.

In accordance to Section 231 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) (Public Law 111–296), this information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service in implementing a program to recognize exemplary breastfeeding support practices at WIC local agencies and clinics. This is a voluntary collection, but failure to provide the requested information in full will prevent applicants from being considered for recognition. FNS will use the information to improve the delivery and tailoring of WIC services and increase satisfaction of both staff and participants. This collection requests only minimal personally identifiable information (email address) which will not be used routinely to retrieve records under the Privacy Act of 1974. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0591. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 2 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th floor, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0591). Do not return the completed form to this address.