

**Awards of Excellence RFA
Updated March 18, 2014**

Questions and Answers

Q1: Are there plans to release information on where programs are that are considered gold?

A1: It is unlikely that there will be a public list of these programs prior to the RFA being due. However, there is a lot of information already available that could help applicants get a good sense of where Gold rated programs will be. By policy, those programs that participated in Quality Counts and received 1 or 2 stars are presumed to be Silver Circle of Quality programs; programs that received 3 or 4 stars in Quality Counts are Gold. The list of programs that received star ratings through Quality Count is public and can be found on the INCCRRA website.

The ISBE and CPS site ratings are not available. However applicants could look broadly at where Preschool for All (PFA) and Head Start programs are located. A list of Preschool for All grantees is available on the ISBE website. The OECD estimates that a minimum of 60% of school-based PFA programs will be Gold and this percentage will increase over time.

Also NAEYC accreditation has been cross-walked with ExceleRate and all programs that received NAEYC accreditation have been invited to enroll in ExceleRate with a provision Gold rating. The list of NAEYC accredited programs in Illinois is publicly available through NAEYC.

Q2: Will the OECD release a heat map of high risk children in the state and will this interact with the Innovation Zones?

A2: There is no competitive preference for working with the Innovation Zones. Applicants should look at the IECAM website (iecam.illinois.edu) to map out the highest need children. IECAM provides details on risk factors such as poverty, deep poverty and language isolation.

Q3: Will the OECD publish a process for Gold programs to go through the Awards of Excellence Application process?

A3: An application process will not be published prior to the RFA being due. The process will mostly be arranged as a portfolio review.

Q4: How will application process work for programs who wish to receive assistance with preparing for and applying for an Award of Excellence?

A4: This should be part of your application. Applicants should include how they would identify the programs that they will work with to prepare for and apply for the AOE's.

Q5: Does the OECD anticipate applicants applying to support programs in achieving multiple AOE's?

A5: We are leaving this up to the applicants. Applicants can apply for one or more AOE and in one or more geographic area. There is no competitive preference given to applicants that apply for more than one AOE or geographic area.

Q6: Can the budget be submitted in an Excel file and the appendices in a PDF?

A6: Yes

Q7: How will private funding be considered for a public private partnership?

A7: Applicants should describe all other resources that they will be receiving for this project. There is no reason that an applicant could not accept private funding for AOE's. There will, however, be no competitive preference given to programs that receive private funds.

Q8: Will TA be limited to PFA programs in located in schools?

A8: No

Q9: Where are the standards for the Awards of Excellence?

A9: The standards and evidence for all of the Awards of Excellence are available on the OECD website: <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/OECD/Pages/default.aspx>

Q10: If an applicant is applying to provide support services around more than one award, are they allowed additional pages to explain their services/approach/project?

A10: No

Q11: May applicants submit additional appendices that are not explicitly asked for in the RFA that provide visual descriptions of the approach, program or support services?

A11: Yes, but no more than 5 pages.

Q12: Can you please clarify the total points awarded for section C? I see that "Section C – Application" on page 20 is worth a total of 100 points, and broken down by Purpose of Funding 80 points, Target Population 20 points and Community Outreach 10 points. This totals 110 points.

A12: There is a typo on page 20 there are 110 points.

Q13: Regarding the budget forms and narrative, on page 23, the RFA lists that the budget and justification should be no longer than 7 pages. Do the 7 pages include all of the budget forms in Attachment C or do the 7 pages only apply to the budget narrative, detailed on page 43?

A13: The 7 pages applies to just the narrative.

Q14: Has DHS posted the FAQ page on the website? I've been looking on DHS's website and saw the Q&A from the Grants Information call, but cannot seem to find the FAQ link.

A14: There is not an FAQ only the questions and answers.

Q15: 2. Can "Program" be a specific classroom in a setting or does this mean for the whole site?

A15: To qualify for an Award of Excellence, the whole site needs to be Gold and the whole site needs to be included in the Award of Excellence process. For the Preschool and Infant-Toddler awards, these focus just on those parts of the program. And in schools that include grades above preschool, those higher grades do not have to be included in the process.

Q16: If an applicant includes visuals to convey a point, can the font size in the visual be smaller than 12 point font?

A16: Yes

Q17: Can the visuals be displayed in “landscape” orientation, rather than “portrait” orientation?

A17: Yes

Q18: The RFA requests evidence-based approaches and supporting research and evidence. How should an applicant handle citations within the proposal narrative?

A18: References should be included as footnotes.