



Invitation to Participate

Guidelines
2009

For the lead agency participation in *New York State Quality Rating and Improvement System* -- QUALITYstarsNY field test



101 West 31st Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY, 10001
www.earlychildhoodnyc.org

BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, a group of early childhood experts from across New York State has been working cooperatively with various government organizations to design a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QUALITYstarsNY). This system is intended to focus the investment of public funds in early childhood services that produce results. QUALITYstarsNY creates a framework and structure that will help NYS spend its limited public dollars wisely.

QUALITYstarsNY is designed to recognize programs that demonstrate quality above and beyond meeting New York's strong regulatory standards. QUALITYstarsNY will be designed to improve quality and provide supports such as technical assistance and professional development. Participation in QUALITYstarsNY will not be required; programs that do participate will gain access to support services and financial benefits.

The initial phase of QUALITYstarsNY implementation is a field test with statewide implementation to commence shortly thereafter. The field test will be conducted in 13 communities throughout the state of NY and will include only those programs that are regulated by a government agency, e.g. Office of Children and Family Services, NYC Department of Health, and/or State Education Department. These programs include child care centers, family child care homes, registered nursery schools, prekindergarten programs (in public schools and community based organizations), Head Start and Early Head Start, special education (4410) schools, among others.

The goals of the field test are to assess the following and/or additional research areas:

- Effectiveness of the orientation process to QUALITYstarsNY
- Effectiveness and efficiency of the application process and required documentation
- Assessment (onsite and application review)
- Validity of the rating standards
- Cost of proposed quality improvements
- Satisfaction of programs with financial awards and incentives of different types and amounts
- Use of existing program supports
- Educational value of participating in QUALITYstarsNY
- The appropriate role for existing state resources and personnel (e.g. licensing staff)

The NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (Coordinator) serves as the coordinating agency for the field test. An evaluator has also been selected who will oversee the validity and effectiveness studies and the assessment portion of the field test. A Quality Improvement Coordinator will oversee the quality improvement planning process.

For more information in QUALITYstarsNY please visit www.qualitystarsny.org

LEAD AGENCY SCOPE OF SERVICES

Each community will authorize a lead agency to manage the community's participation in the field test. Lead agencies will play a crucial role in the field test. Their responsibilities include:

1. Market QUALITYstarsNY in the community and provide information on the field test to providers and programs.
2. Help identify the wide range of types of programs and providers needed to participate in the field test based on sampling procedures developed by the field test evaluation team.
3. Identify quality improvement supports in the community that will be available to programs to help improve their quality after programs and providers receive their quality ratings.
4. Attend a statewide orientation session with other lead agencies
5. Organize a community orientation session with programs and providers to familiarize them with the field test and assessment process.
6. Engage with providers to help them prepare for the independent assessment and with completing their star-rating applications.
7. Regularly communicate with the coordinator and the evaluation team.
8. Act as QUALITYstarsNY's "voice" on the ground and work with the Coordinator to address any issues.
9. Designate a staffer to be the main day-to-day contact person to the field test Coordinator, Evaluator and Quality Coordinator.

DESIGNATION PROCESS

This is a self-selection exercise. Community leaders should meet and decide amongst themselves which entity is best suited to perform the role of the lead agency. A convening entity (possibly, but not necessarily, a neutral party who is not interested in being lead agency) may call a meeting and invite everyone who is listed as having received the ITP (see Attachment B.) The meeting should be at a place convenient for most people and at an appropriate time (early evening on a weekday for example). Anyone who is not able to make the meeting should be encouraged to provide input either before or after the meeting. The scope of services listed above should be used as a framework for any discussion amongst the groups in attendance. Some questions to consider during the discussion include:

- How has my agency historically performed the functions listed in the scope of services?
- What is our relationship to providers? Do we have access to different types of providers?
- What is our capacity to bring together different types of entities in this community?
- Can we designate a staff person to work part-time with the field test Coordinator?

There are a number of ways communities may wish to form a lead agency. Two example scenarios are presented below:

- Form a community advisory group that works closely with the lead agency. This advisory group will allow numerous entities to be involved in the field test process while making one agency responsible for the specific duties of the lead agency.
- Two or more agencies may collaborate as a "lead agency" and share the responsibilities and stipend.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Responders must describe their capacity to address the scope of services outlined for the lead agency. Responders must also demonstrate how the community came to the conclusion as to who should be the lead agency. Some acceptable ways to demonstrate the selection process are listed below:

- Documentation of community meetings that have taken place. For each meeting please include the date, time, location of the meeting, convening agency, and who attended the meeting. You may attach meeting notes, agendas, voting records etc.
- Letters of support from at least 3 other agencies who were also sent the ITP.
- Records of any votes, discussions held at meetings

One response from your community should be mailed, faxed, emailed or delivered by **November 16, 2009** to:

NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute
Attention: Ola Friday
101 West 31st Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY, 10001

Questions and/or comments may be addressed by contacting Ola Friday at ola.friday@mail.cuny.edu or (212) 652-2067.

If more than one response is submitted, all responses will be sent back to the community with instructions to further meet and decide which entity should be the lead agency. The Coordinator may help to facilitate this process if necessary.

Lead agency announcements will be made via phone call and will be posted on the website on or about November 20, 2009.

STIPEND

The lead agency will receive a stipend of \$10,000 in appreciation of its partnership and cooperation and to help offset the costs of its involvement. Stipends may be used for all or some of the following (other things can be included in this list upon discussion with the Coordinator).

- Cost of a part-time QSNY project assistant
- Refreshments at the community orientation session(s)
- Marketing materials
- Office supplies
- Travel to the statewide orientation session

Lead agencies will be asked to keep track of expenditures and submit documentation of how stipend was spent.

TIMEFRAME

Lead agencies will work with the Coordinator and evaluator throughout the duration of the field test. Please see the attached timeline (Attachment A) for further information. Please note that at

least one lead agency representative must attend the statewide orientation session scheduled for Friday December 4, 2009 at the New York State Office of Children and Family Services in Rensselaer, NY.

RESPONSES

A community's response should meet the following criteria:

- _____ Response was submitted on time
- _____ Response included all required information including the organization's contact information
- _____ Response described the organization's credentials, overall capacity and knowledge and expertise in the area of early care and education programs and systems
- _____ Credentials of the lead agency reflected their ability to complete the responsibilities based on past experience
- _____ Response reflected an overall description of the lead agency services that would be provided to meet the intended goals of the Field Test
- _____ Response reflected some knowledge of program quality assessment tools and program quality improvement processes, especially the Environment Rating Scales
- _____ Proposal reflects the organization's ability to attend meetings as applicable

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can a for-profit company be a lead agency?

Yes, private entity can be a lead agency provided that they are able to perform the required functions.

Can a provider be a lead agency?

Typically a provider cannot be a lead agency unless the provider also provides a substantial amount of training, professional development, and/or technical assistance to other providers and is regarded as a successful convener in the community.

Can a coalition of agencies be the lead agency?

Yes, a group of agencies may come together to be the "lead agency." The coordinator will award the stipend to only one agency and that agency may divide it among the other agencies. Alternatively, communities may wish to form an advisory panel comprised of a number of agencies and designate one agency to be the lead agency.

What if a community cannot reach an agreement on who the lead agency should be?

Communities may select a neutral party to act as a mediator to help reach consensus. As a last resort, the Coordinator may fulfill this role.

What is the role of the lead agency after the field test?

There is no prescribed role for the lead agency post field test. Agencies may wish to use the field test findings to refine and revise their services in the community. A lead agency in the field test will not receive any advantage or special status in the full implementation of QUALITYstarsNY.

Does the lead agency choose the providers who will participate in the field test?

The lead agency will market the field test to providers. Once providers indicate their interest in participating in the field test the evaluator will select the final list of participating providers.

When will the lead agency get paid?

The lead agency will receive a portion of the stipend upfront and the balance of the stipend at the end of the field test.

Can an agency that provides technical assistance and training to providers act as a lead agency? Will this cause a conflict of interest?

Yes, an agency that works with programs and providers can act as a lead agency. Lead agencies should have existing relationships with providers and be knowledgeable about the community. Lead agencies will not choose the programs or providers that will participate in the field test. Assessments and ratings will be done by an independent evaluator. Programs will not be assessed by anyone who has previously worked with the program.

If we chose to form an Advisory Committee should all types of early learning programs be represented?

To the best extent possible, the community's Advisory Committee should reflect the array of licensed early learning programs in that community.

ATTACHMENT A

Timeline

The following timeline outlines the major components of the community and lead agency involvement in the field test. These dates are subject to change.

The community will:	The lead agency will:	Timeframe
Receive letter soliciting community participation in field test		9/18/2009 – 9/30/2009
Meet and discuss community participation in the field test and how best to organize to select a lead agency		9/18/2009 – 10/12/2009
Receive Invitation to Participate		By 10/16/2009
Meet and determine which agency is best suited to act as the lead agency for the field test		10/16/2009 – 11/16/2009
Submit one response to PDI indicating selection of lead agency and proof of community support (TBD)		By 11/16/2009
	Meet with other lead agencies for a one-day statewide field test orientation session	12/04/2009
	Help solicit program and provider participation in the field test	11/16/2009 – 01/31/2010
	Conduct a community orientation session for possible participating programs and providers	01/ 2010
	Conduct follow-up field test orientation sessions as needed with participating programs and providers	01/ 2010 – 02/28/2010
	Assist programs and providers with preparing for the independent assessment and completing the rating application	01/ 2010 – 05/ 2010
	Support providers in developing (and possibly implementing) Quality Improvement Plans	02/ 2010 – 06 /2010