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Information Card

The Excellent rating is the highest rating an education and care service can achieve under the National Quality Framework.

For information on the Excellent rating and application criteria and guidelines, visit: aceqa.gov.au/assessment/excellent-rating/apply

Consider

‘The actions of one are great’ but more is needed for an Excellent rating than just the actions of one person.

Consider what this might mean for your service when applying for the Excellent rating.

Discussion Point

How do you use the expertise of your children, families and community groups/organisations to:
- Strengthen your practices
- Inform your policies, procedures and philosophy
- Educate and provide professional development opportunities for your families and staff
- Contribute to local community, Council, or Government programs or initiatives?

Discussion Point

An aspect of Criterion 1, Theme 4 is that your exceptional practices support a positive workplace culture, and staff confidently contribute to unifying organisational values.

Ask each educator and staff member to identify and document some key aspects that:
- Drives their practice
- They believe makes your workplace exceptional
- They value about the service.

Discussion Point

How does your service use strategic and forward planning documents to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to:
- Quality improvement
- Sustained practices
- A comprehensive forward planning cycle?

Discuss and document how responsibilities, roles and actionable timeframes are decided, distributed and met by your team.

Activity

Write down all of your internal and external stakeholders?

List and plan how they could be involved in all stages of the Excellent rated application process, including the:
- Initial discussions
- Evidence collection
- The writing and review of your application

Discussion Point

Discuss and document
- What practices are unique to your service and community environment?
- When and how do you share your practices with other services or those in the sector?
- When and how do you support other services to improve their practices?
- When and how do other services support you to improve your practice?
Discussion Point

Discuss and identify any actions and outcomes which have resulted in reducing or removing barriers to inclusion at your service. Discuss how this has led to your children and families experiencing an increase and improvement to:
- Service and program access
- Service participation and involvement
- Communication
- A sense of belonging.

Discussion Point

How do service leaders measure the effect of programs and practices on improved outcomes for enrolled children, and children?

How are the effects of your services practice evaluated for children and families in your community and beyond?

Discussion Point

The Excellent rating criteria relates to the intent of the National Quality Standard, but are different.

As a team, discuss what this means for your Excellent rating application?

*Remember, there is no need to demonstrate to ACECQA how you have achieved your Exceeding NQS rating.

Criterion 1 of the Excellent rating is supported when you can demonstrate in each theme the outcomes for children and families that are exceptional.
- Discuss how you can demonstrate your exceptional practice that has improved outcomes for children against the themes you are applying for
- Are some themes more challenging than others to demonstrate this for? What could you share with ACECQA for these themes?

Discussion Point

Quality, even at the highest level, provides continuous improvement opportunities.
- If the service is awarded Excellent by ACECQA, how will you maintain excellence and continually improve service practices for the duration of the rating?
- Have you included these details in your application?

Trivia

Who is responsible for assessing and awarding the Excellent rating?

Answer: Only ACECQA, as the National Authority, can assess, award and re-award the Excellent rating. (S. 134(2))

Education and Care services rated Exceeding National Quality Standard in all seven quality areas are eligible to apply and reapply.

Trivia

When applying for the Excellent rating, a service needs to provide what type of information?

Answer: Current information through statements and evidence which demonstrates:
- How you have improved outcomes for your current children and families at the highest level
- How you have developed a community, local area or the wider education and care sector
- Your plans for the next three years.

Multiple choice

If a service re-applies, under Criterion 1, the service must:
- Reapply against all five themes of Criterion 1
- Reapply using the Criterion 1 themes they previously applied for
- Reapply against a minimum of three Criterion 1 themes of their choosing
- Reapply using only one theme from their previous application.
**Multiple Choice**

How is your regulatory authority involved with the assessment of Excellent rating applications?

a. By providing ACECQA with information about your services compliance and A&R history
b. By providing ACECQA your latest assessment and rating report and compliance history
c. By determining the outcome of your application
d. By determining how your application meets the three Exceeding National Quality Standard themes.

**Multiple Choice**

How long does ACECQA have to assess and make the decision on an Excellent application?

a. 30 days + five days to inform the service of the outcome.
b. 60 days + 14 days to inform the service of the outcome.
c. 80 days + 14 days to inform the service of the outcome.
d. 90 days + two weeks to inform the service of the outcome.

**Scenario**

Your service wants to apply for the Excellent rating. Some team members have expressed concern about the work, time and involvement required to submit an application.

How would you plan the application process so that all staff experience the application process as:

- Equitable, celebratory and achievable
- A team building and worthwhile reflective experience.

**Scenario**

A family member ‘Mona’ ask to have more involvement in the service’s cultural experiences and events. Mona also offers to introduce the service to respected cultural representatives in the local community.

Note down any service actions that can extend Mona’s decision-making and participation within already existing programs.

How can her involvement build new opportunities for family advocacy and community partnerships?

**True/False**

When a service applies for Excellent, they are responsible for providing ACECQA with all of the information necessary that demonstrates how they have responded to the three Excellent rating criteria.

**Answer:** True.

A service’s Excellent rated application needs to provide detailed statements with evidence which demonstrate how the service meets each criterion.

ACECQA may request additional information from your service during the 60-day assessment period.

**True/False**

You can only be awarded the Excellent rating for Criteria 3 if you have been awarded it for Criteria 1 and 2.

**Answer:** True.

For the purposes of the Excellent rating, to demonstrate a commitment to sustained excellent practice and forward planning, you must first be awarded it.

If you haven’t been awarded Excellent for Criterion 1 and 2, it is unable to be awarded for Criterion 3.

**True/False**

A reapplying service can reference practices, programs and partnerships from its first application

**Answer:** True.

A service can reference previous practices. However, your re-application needs to demonstrate how these practices, programs and partnerships have been reviewed, evolved and improved upon since your previous application to meet the needs of your current children and families.

**True / False**

Your Excellent rated application evidence must be in written form only.

**Answer:** False.

Your evidence may be in the form of documents, images, videos, and audio recordings.

However, you do not need to use the application form and provide a written statement for each criterion and theme which explains how your service meets the Excellent rating criteria.
True / False

Your service must have a worm farm, fire pit, bush kindy, and intergenerational program to be awarded the Excellent rating.

Answer: False.

There is no one program or practice that demonstrates exceptional practice. Importantly, your service needs to demonstrate how its programs, practices and partnerships have been tailored to respond to and meet your current child and family needs, what makes them exceptional and how they meet the Excellent rating criteria.

True / False

A service must contact another Excellent rated service when writing their application.

Answer: True.

You are not required to contact an Excellent rated service. You may find it helpful to contact an Excellent rated service when seeking advice, asking questions and when writing and reviewing your application.

A list of current Excellent rated services can be found online at: acecqa.gov.au/assessment/excellent-rating

True / False

You must maintain an Exceeding National Quality Standard (NQS) rating in all seven quality areas to maintain an Excellent rating.

Answer: True.

A service must maintain an Exceeding NQS rating in all seven quality areas during its three year Excellent award period. ACECQA will re-visit an Excellent rating when a service is reassessed by their regulatory authority and no longer rated Exceeding NQS in all seven quality areas. (S. 155 (5) 158 (a) (b) of the National Law).

True / False

Repeating the same annual events and excursions for a three-year period is evidence of an exceptional long-term collaborative partnership.

Answer: False.

An exceptional collaborative partnership must demonstrate more than a relationship. It should show how both parties are actively engaged and achieving mutually beneficial outcomes in the partnership. Criterion 1 requires demonstration of the relevance and modification of practices, programs and partnerships to respond to the needs of current children and families.

True / False

To meet Criterion 1, Theme 2, you only have to reference programs and practices that demonstrate your services commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Answer: True.

You need to demonstrate a commitment to celebrating the cultures and diverse abilities of your children and families and/or how you embed community approaches and understandings at your service.

True / False

In your Excellent rating application you need to demonstrate why you were awarded the Exceeding National Quality Standard (NQS) in all seven quality areas.

Answer: True.

An application for the Excellent rating does not need to demonstrate why you received the Exceeding NQS rating from the regulatory authority. You need to demonstrate how you are meeting the Excellent rating criteria.

Activity

Using clipboards, a camera or digital device, ask staff to walk around the service and document what they believe demonstrates examples or concepts of exceptional practice. Review the collected information as a team and identify practice and evidence for your Excellent rated application.

Activity

An aspect of Criterion 1, Theme 4: Positive workplace culture, organisation values, support of educators and sustained commitment to professional development, relates to leadership occurring within your service.

Criterion 2: Visionary leadership relates to leadership occurring outside of your service.

Brainstorm and identify your exceptional practice examples of internal and external leadership and place them with the corresponding criterion.
Activity

Review your service’s professional development history. Identify:
• Why training was organised
• Who took part in the training
• How professional development needs are identified at your service
• How the training responded to and benefited your children, families and staff
• How professional development is a planned and ongoing process.

Activity

At a team meeting, take turns to name a service practice you believe is exceptional. Identify how the practice:
• Was introduced, when and why
• Meets current child and/or family needs
• Has improved outcomes for children and families
• Aligns with the Excellent rating criteria
• Could be improved upon
• Can be shared and celebrated.

Activity

Criterion 1, Theme 3 relates to how your service partners with its children and families to promote inclusive practices and generate improvements.
Document the name and an explanation of a service practice or program that enhances a child’s and/or family’s ability to:
• Advocate for matters identified as important to them
• Take on roles and responsibilities that enhance their service ownership and influence.

Activity

Document how your physical environment and the spaces, resources and practices occurring within it has been shaped by any of the following:
• Child and/or family influence
• Current or emerging research
• The local community context
• In response to child/family needs or circumstances
• A review, evaluation or changes to practice.

Activity

As a team, brainstorm when you have invited community members, external educators or educational representatives to your service.
Identify and document:
• The reason for their visit
• What happened during their visit/s
• What they gained from visiting your service and any changes they made to their practice
• What your service gained from their visit/s.

Activity

In five minutes, list as many ways as possible that your service has made a difference in the local community?
This could include initiatives, events, groups, meetings, resource sharing, advocacy or other means of support and engagement.

Activity

In five minutes list as many ways as possible that the service has made a difference to the children’s education and care sector?
Document when, how and why your service made a difference and what improvement to children’s outcomes have been made.

Activity

Develop a plan about how you can use information and relationships with your local community to influence service and community practices, decision making processes and continuous improvement?
What type of partnership/s (professional, community or research) could help you meet:
• The needs of your current child and families
• Service, community and/or sector needs and outcomes?