



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ALL-AMERICA CITY GRADE-LEVEL READING AWARD

www.allamericacityaward.com

[Can only cities compete for the All-America City Awards? What about counties, towns, states?](#)

Cities, counties, towns, villages, regions, and even neighborhoods can compete in the All-America City Awards. Unfortunately, entire states are ineligible to apply.

[What are the benefits of being an All-America City?](#)

The primary benefit is national recognition for a job well done. The designation can be and has been used successfully to market and showcase communities to prospective new employers and homebuyers. Communities have leveraged the award to win grants, boost credit ratings, and burnish their national image. It is also a valuable learning experience and a source of inspiration for many communities. The 10 winners will also be part of a group of sites that will receive additional support and assistance in actually implementing their plans.

[Are there benefits to simply applying for the award?](#)

Yes, communities that file letters of intent to apply for the award will immediately become part of the Grade-Level Reading Network of Leading Cities, Counties, Districts, and States (the GLR Network). Starting this fall, network members will receive priority access to:

- **Experts** in each of the three community solutions areas
- **Funders** with an interest in supporting local campaigns
- **Policymakers** at the federal and state levels through Campaign convenings, webinars, and calls
- **Models** of programs and practices with proven impact
- **Peers** in other cities facing similar challenges
- **Media** products that can be localized to help you spread the word
- **Opportunities** to publicize and promote their work
- **Systems** for common data collection and analysis

Regardless of whether you win the award, this support can help your community adopt effective and innovative strategies for significantly improving early school success.

Can we get these benefits if we don't submit a letter of intent?

It is unlikely that the Campaign will have the resources and bandwidth to extend these benefits beyond the GLR Network.

Why are the 2012 and 2015 award competitions focused on grade-level reading?

The National Civic League wants to have a direct impact on an issue of critical importance to communities by assisting, energizing, and recognizing outstanding accomplishment in this area. An educated citizenry is the foundation of a strong democracy and a vibrant economy.

What is the process for participating in the 2012 award?

The first step is submitting a letter of intent by Oct. 14, 2011. The letter entitles communities to receive training and technical assistance. The next step is to fill out an application, which will be due in March 2012. Finalists will be selected in April, and they will present their mobilization plans in Denver between June 30 and July 2 of next year.

What are the 2012 mobilization criteria?

Communities must develop comprehensive, realistic, and sustainable plans to increase grade-level reading proficiency by the end of the third grade. Also, they must incorporate the core All-America City criteria of inclusiveness/diversity, authentic community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration.

Strategies must include three areas that have real potential to drive improvements in grade-level reading:

- **school readiness** – too many young children show up for school not ready to learn
- **school attendance** – too many children in grades K-3 miss too many days of school
- **summer learning** – too many children in the early grades lose ground over the summer months

Communities must provide:

- A detailed review of baseline data data for grade-level reading proficiency and plans for data-driven solutions for these three issues
- Plans for comprehensive, innovative, and evidence-based strategies to improve grade-level reading
- Evidence of broad public engagement
- Evidence of significant cross-sector leadership and support
- Focus on the needs of young children with a special emphasis on those living in poverty
- Local capacity to implement and sustain the plan and track impact over time

[Do we need to provide all of that information by the time we file our letter of intent?](#)

No, you'll need that when you submit your application in March. For the October letter, you'll need to show that you have pulled together a coalition that will work to develop the solutions and to engage the full community, and that you have a plan for obtaining baseline data, if you don't already have it in hand. The letter of intent, which should be no longer than three pages, will not be used to judge applicants.

[Who should submit the actual letter of intent?](#)

Any of the lead entities can submit the letter. It can be a mayor, a city manager, a community foundation executive, a nonprofit leader, or a superintendent.

[Does the mayor need to be involved in our campaign? What if there's an election coming up?](#)

It is important that local government is a key partner, whether represented by the mayor, a council person, or a city manager.

[When will the full application be available?](#)

November 2011

[Does the community plan have to address all three issues: school readiness, summer learning, and attendance?](#)

Yes. We want the communities to attend to all three strategic areas. Research suggests that improvement in each of these areas can have dramatic impact on reading proficiency levels and that combined together they can move the needle even further. If a community has less experience in one or two of these arenas, its plan could address how it will expand its work to encompass this dimension.

[What about better teaching and curriculum? Aren't those issues important to improving academic achievement, too?](#)

We must hold schools accountable for helping all children achieve, and that includes quality teaching for every child, every day. But schools cannot succeed alone. We need health providers, social workers, community nonprofits, faith-based groups, business and civic leaders, and local foundations to help.

[Can we build on existing work, or does this have to be a new initiative?](#)

We recognize that many communities already have made huge strides toward addressing the problems we've identified, and we encourage them to apply for the award. Cities may also find that they've covered one or two of the key issues but not all three. The Campaign's technical assistance can help flesh out the missing pieces and find ways to increase impact by aligning investments—for example, making sure the benefits of programs improving school readiness are not lost because children then fall behind due to chronic absence in the early grades. If you've just started a project, this is a great opportunity to get support from all hands, as well as the attention of local and national philanthropy.

What kind of training and technical assistance will be provided?

Technical assistance will focus on the process of developing a grade-level reading plan and laying out action steps. The Campaign is assembling a roster of experts who will advise communities in the GLR Network. There will also be access to meetings with state and federal officials, as well as webinars, peer-to-peer discussions, and other resources for participating communities. The National Civic League will provide a free Civic Index, a community self-evaluation tool.

Does membership in the GLR Network bring financial support?

We expect local and at times national foundations to join in the coalition supporting a community's application. In addition, communities in the network will be included in a registry for funders who invest in, or are considering investments in, grade-level reading.

What does it cost to apply/compete for award?

The application fee is \$100 (and applicants get a one-year AAC membership valued at \$100). If you are a finalist attending the event in Denver, registration fees for delegates are \$50 a person (with the first five free). The remaining costs include travel and lodging for the event. The hotel cost will be \$159 per room per night, with options for two, three, and four people in a room.

Can we apply again for 2012 if we've won AAC in the past few years?

Yes. There is no limit to how many times (or when) you can apply for the All-America City Award. Some communities have applied and won as many as five times.

Where can I get more information about the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading?

The Campaign is a collaborative effort among dozens of foundations and nonprofits to move the needle on third grade reading. You can find out more about the Campaign by visiting www.gradelevelreading.net.

Who are the lead partners in the All-America City Grade-Level Reading Award?

The National Civic League is partnering with the National League of Cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the United Way Worldwide.

How about the 2015 award? Do I have to win in 2012 to be able to apply for the 2015 All-America City Grade-Level Reading Impact Award?

No. The 2015 award will recognize communities that have moved the needle on grade-level reading, regardless of whether they participate in the 2012 awards.

What sort of data do we need to compile?

The first step is determining what proportion of students are reading on grade-level. If there are NAEP scores for your community, use the fourth grade reading proficiency levels. If not, use state tests given at the end of third grade or beginning of fourth grade. We'll provide more detail later on further data you'll need. In the meantime, Attendance Works has prepared a toolkit to help community leaders analyze data and intervene to improve attendance. Go to www.attendanceworks.org.

Why do we have to address all three issues?

Research shows strong connections among the three. Students who arrive at kindergarten ready for school, but then miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade, generally do not read proficiently by the end of third grade. At the same time, those who aren't ready for kindergarten seldom reach that third-grade milestone, regardless of their attendance records. Likewise, summer learning loss can set back low-income children, erasing some of the readiness gains and the hard work they've achieved attending school.

Read more about the awards and the GLR Network in these [online resources](#).

Watch the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading video [here](#).

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