

2024 EXCELLENCE IN INSURANCE EDUCATION AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Excellence in Insurance Education award recognizes state associations and staff who have made significant contributions to insurance education for members and the industry. Through a variety of traditional and cutting-edge professional development programs, recipients of this award have proven their dedication to promoting quality insurance education and the Big 'I' Agent Development Group is proud to honor them for their accomplishments.

DIAMOND ELITE*

**States that have achieved Diamond status for 10+ years in a row*

Florida

Six-time Diamond Elite recipient Florida's focused on providing education member benefits for free to agencies part of the state association. In 2020, FAIA started offering eSummit, a virtual meeting in place of the annual convention due to COVID-19. The e-Summit just completed its fifth year and has helped more than 4,000 agents attain CE credits virtually. In addition to these offerings, FAIA is focused on collaborating with other state associations to develop new content. This includes creating new speakers and programs that everyone can share and bringing new tools to associations to make each insurance professional a better advocate for their client.

Kansas

As a three-time Diamond Elite recipient, Kansas implemented a series of strategic initiatives to bolster its position as a leader in insurance education. The 2023 annual convention had an unprecedented turnout and attendees had the chance to earn up to 75% of the CE credits required for license renewal. They also worked closely with MarshBerry to offer a series of free webinars focused on excellence in insurance. KAIA also created a comprehensive calendar of educational events to ensure members had access to a diverse range of programs and topics to serve as a trusted resource for education in the region.

Maine

Maine, achieving Diamond Elite status for the third year in a row, offers different avenues for those new to the industry to learn, along with opportunities to intern and job shadow. A key piece of education over the past year has been reaching out to high schools and sharing information about the insurance industry, then exploring the industry and possible careers. A huge asset to the success of the program is the many partnerships with vendors and the relationships with other state associations to create and offer the best training programs.

Massachusetts

2023 was a big year for three-time Diamond Elite recipient Massachusetts. The year included many advancements to technological platforms, including a new account management system (AMS), learning management system (LMS), webinar platform, and addition of hybrid classes. The new AMS gives members more autonomy to control their personal information and stores information related to their licensing and designations. The new LMS has led to an increase in the purchase of video and on-demand courses and led to the of the AILP program. Switching from GoToWebinar to Zoom provided a sense of familiarity to members who would be completing classes remotely. A hybrid classroom was established at the beginning of 2023 and has led to a 5% increase in attendance with the added flexibility for attendees.

Nebraska

Achieving Diamond Elite status for the third time, Nebraska has focused delivering CE events multiple times throughout the year. Two free CE events were hosted online by ABEN – Summer Spectacular Free CE and National ABEN Day Free CE event – and 12 hours of CE were presented between both events. Two comprehensive education-focused conventions with CE and non-CE professional growth opportunities were offered for members. At the Spring Conference, members could update their AFIS designation or make progress toward their CISR designation. The Fall Convention focused on leadership, agency development and emerging risks. Alongside these events, a “New Hire” basic insurance training program was launched and a NextGen Lunch & Learn webinar series brought individuals together to discuss relevant topics to develop professionally.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire, reaching Diamond Elite status for the third time, had a transformative year in 2023. Offerings were expanded by updating an IRMI licensing agreement. On-demand content is being re-written and re-recorded to include the most up-to-date information and will be available on ABEN. The P&C pre-licensing book has been completely re-formatted with two versions available, physical and interactive PDF. A variety of courses are being taught – E&O, ethics, insurance basics, flood, and many others – and feedback is offered in real-time. This allows for content to be adapted and changed to fit the needs of members and their different learning styles.

New Jersey

In its third year as a Diamond Elite recipient, New Jersey has focused on one of the most pressing issues facing insurance agencies today, the recruitment of new talent. The association engages with high school guidance counselors annual to share career opportunities, participate in career days, and promote the Invest program. Big I New Jersey also publishes a monthly e-newsletter called *The Educator*, dedicated to educational content. It features a “class of the month,” highlights ABEN webcasts, and other offerings from the association. The association has increased participation in online CE over the past decade. Over 160 webcasts are offered, and more than 1,000 individuals have participated, fulfilling their CE requirements.

New York

Five-time Diamond Elite recipient New York continues to lead a successful education program. In-person education is slowly returning and numerous classes were offered with requests from 25 different member agencies. Their annual E&O seminar had over 850 attendees and included live/in-person classes for the first time since COVID. Leadership Academy has become an agency favorite, which led to the creation of Leadership Academy 2 with separate cohorts for member agencies. GearUPs, webinars for pulled together for an immediate need – like cyber regulation in New York, brought together over 550 attendees around five topics. Other activities include Town Halls, Invest involvement, and individual agency visits.

North Carolina

As a four-time Diamond Elite recipient, North Carolina is staying at the forefront of emerging technologies and insurance trends. They installed new technology to offer courses in a hybrid learning environment and use a learning management system (LMS) to bring free courses to members. Their in-house Pre-Licensing Program continues to have one of the highest passing rates in North Carolina first-time exam takers. Other offerings include designation and certification programs like CIC, CISR, TRA, and The Ultimate Account Manager Programs, along with the IA-MBA Program. Recently added is the Agent

Development Program, a free benefit to members. It builds on InsurAcademy to help with the transition from new employee to essential employee in an agency. This program is personalized on the LMS and can be customized to fit agency needs.

Oklahoma

As a first-time Diamond Elite recipient, 2023 was a big year for Oklahoma! Two successful workshops on agency perpetuation and future ownership of an agency were created – Legacy Blueprint and Blueprint for Success. The first workshop focused on current agency owners and operational details, while the second workshop educated individuals interested in owning an agency in the future. Free Friday Ethics continued to be offered to help agents achieve their three mandatory ethics credits for each license period. These classes, produced in partnership in ABEN in an on-demand format, ranged from 20-120 participants. Big I OK also partnered with other state associations to offer benefits to members, including a Webinar Wednesday series with Ohio, the IA-MBA program with North Carolina, and CIC, CISR, and other seminars with Kansas.

South Carolina

In its fourth year as a Diamond Elite recipient, South Carolina is dedicated to providing content to members in multiple formats – in-person, online, at conferences, at local associations, and in a hybrid format from a newly upfitted education center. They offer the CIC, CISR, and AIAM programs in-house and have partnered with Big I New Jersey to offer the CRIS designation program. Alongside these programs, Big I South Carolina also offers a Human Resources training in partnership with ABEN. Additionally, 10 new webcasts were recorded and uploaded to the ABEN network in 2023 to be presented to South Carolina and other states that use the platform. Through programs like InsurAcademy and CISR in High School, South Carolina was able to find new, trained staff. They continue to use Big I Hires and Career Plug to recruit talent as well.

Washington

As a two-time Diamond Elite recipient, Washington focuses on current legislative issues and focuses on teaching classes each year related to this content. The state association also hosts a Big I Washington Legislative Day at the beginning of the year which is very popular. Washington partners with ABEN to provide webinars to members and have participants in classes each week. Their annual conference provides a mix of content like traditional training, short demonstrations, and roundtable discussions. 2023 provided the opportunity to look toward the future – which includes offering traveling CE classes.

DIAMOND

Alabama

Alabama reached Diamond status for the first year! In 2023, they educated 1,335 agency and company employees across nine programs. These programs include: AIIA webinars, CIC, Rubles, CISR, CRM, ProFocus, P&C licensing, Ethics & E&O). Alabama worked closely with ABEN to offer webinars on their platform. The state association also offers Online Pre-Licensing for employees in a traditional classroom setting at the association office or online through a partnership with Troy University. Ted Kinney, Alabama education staffer, received an award for best podcast in the National Alliance “Awkward Insurance Program.”

Arkansas

Arkansas, earning a Diamond award for the third year in a row, overcame lots of obstacles in 2023. The year started with an EF3 tornado that tore through central Arkansas, which overwhelmed many agents and agencies across the state. Big I Arkansas immediately took action to provide resources to members, such as disaster relief, communication templates with clients, community aid, coverage tips, and more. In response to the changing conditions of the current marketplace, a priority for Big I Arkansas was keeping members informed and maintaining open lines of communication. A series of free webinars, resources, and access to the AR Insurance Department and Commissioner were established to help with these conversations.

Arizona

Nine-time Diamond recipient Arizona had a big year and increased content and topics delivered to members. Some topics include Cannabis Coverage, From Courtroom to Coverage: UM/UIM Developments You Need To Know, AZ Supreme Court's Dive Into Hot Topic Issues, and It's a Hard Market Charlie Brown. Teaching resumed in a few old locations, included at the Diamondback's Stadium in Downtown Phoenix. Courses include CISR, CIC, and CRIS. Another program that grew in 2023 was the ExamFX P&C pre-licensing classes, with more courses taught in 2023 compared to 2022.

Colorado

Six-time Diamond recipient Colorado has seen great success with online offerings, like live webinars, for CE and non-CE related content. Some of the topics include ethics, E&O, homeowners, agency management and leadership topics. PIIAC partnered with ExamFX to offer a pre-licensing course and offers multiple designation programs through The Institutes at a discounted rate for members. Colorado has also partners with MyAgencyCampus to bring online trainings to new hires in the insurance industry. The association also offers scholarships to individuals to help with covering costs associated with obtaining industry designations.

Connecticut

For the second time, Connecticut is a Diamond recipient. Big 'I' New York manages Connecticut's education program. The Annual Convention – CONNect in Connecticut – was held in November. Some of the insights discussed included the state of the market – what's coming, pro tips for communicating in a hard market, which tech platforms agencies are using and how each impacts value, and much more. Attendance in the morning and afternoon granted three LRE CE! There was a also a Town Hall for New York and Connecticut members where 370 attendees listened to Lisa Lounsbury, President & CEO of Big I New York & Connecticut, as she discussed navigating the hard market.

Delaware

As an eight-time Diamond recipient, Delaware created a professional training schedule that included in-person and online courses. In 2023, CIC, CISR, and James K. Ruble seminars, and P&C licensing courses were highly attended in-person. All other trainings were offered virtually. 281 courses were delivered to 7,838 attendees, and over 200 insurance producers earned professional designations. The first IA&B Conference was held in March 2023 and engaged 130 attendees from 36 independent agencies and 11 carriers. The Young Agents Conference also had 130 attendees from 59 independent agencies and nine carriers.

Illinois

Nine-time Diamond recipient Illinois saw great success this year with an array of course options. They shifted their catalogue and are offering more ABEN classes than ever before. They continued to build off of the success of the hybrid delivery model for CIC and CISR and added pre-licensing. The addition of a Premium Fund Trust Account course counts as three hours of Ethics and is taught by in-house instructors. Illinois also developed a 9-hour and 12-hour CE booklet along with self-study tests for agents to use to obtain their 21 hours, and they can receive their Ethics class for free.

Indiana

Second-time Diamond recipient Indiana worked closely with their members to identify areas for growth in the area of education. They created a marketing plan for FISCE and ABEN webinars that would be more consistent. This included using promo codes, seasonal ads, and more, which led to an increase in webinar attendance. They launched a CSR Master Class program with Sheldon Snodgrass to focus on niche area. It received great feedback from agency owners and will continue in the future. Three large events were hosted throughout the year – Farm Conference, Emerging Leaders Conference and Annual Convention with an emphasis on education and networking opportunities.

Kentucky

Being an eight-time Diamond recipient, Kentucky has focused on making education accessible to members. The state association sponsors an Education Scholarship and has 10-15 hours of CE for free each year. Other low-cost options are also available to ensure agents are trained on the most relevant content in a cost-effective manner. In 2023, they hosted an annual Road Show, where content is developed and presented by in-house lobbyist and legal counsel, focusing on legal and legislative material. Big I Kentucky also hosted a two-day CRM webinar for the National Alliance and coordinated a Kentucky Women Leaders in Insurance Conference.

Louisiana

Eight-time Diamond recipient Louisiana implemented innovative programs and strategic partnerships in 2023. In response to the challenges insurance market conditions, they introduced the Hard Market Toolkit Luncheon Series. This aimed at assisting agents with navigating the complexities of the current marketplace, providing resources, and reviewing marketing materials. It included guest speakers Ben and Jeff Albright, who are industry leaders, who provides updates on engaging state leadership and advocating for strategic reforms. The education program also included cross-collaboration with the Young Agents Conference. They hosted sessions designed to equip emerging leaders with skills and knowledge for career advancement and focused programming on leadership and technology.

Maryland

Maryland has received the Diamond award for the third time. They shifted their education delivery to meet members' preferences for completing their continuing education and training. Over twenty new courses were added to their online ABEN catalog. Other online platforms they utilize include WebCE, CEU, The Institutes, MyAgencyCampus, and Big "I" Virtual University. In 2023, they also launched the IA-MBA program, a fully virtual initiative that awards members with an IA-MBA certificate and qualifies for CE credit in Maryland. Additionally, Catalyt was also a resource added to their list of tools and resources available for members.

Michigan

For the ninth year in a row, Michigan achieved Diamond level. In 2023, all classes were held in office. There were 45 classes total with 1,668 individuals in attendance. All classes were offered as hybrid options for learners as well. In conjunction with their pre-licensing partner, 14 classes with 262 were held. These classes had a 75% passing rate – the highest in the state. Big I Michigan also revamped their in-house designation with new content and speakers. In 2023, there were four networking events with 846 registered attendees.

Minnesota

Minnesota, earning a Diamond award for the fourth year in a row, focused on offering high quality CE sessions. Previously, Big I Minnesota had brought on a virtual assistant. Her involvement in the execution part of education has helped with the growth and development of educational offerings through the state association. In 2023, Minnesota revamped the Emerging Leaders Program by committee, consistent educational events, and meetings times. Priority was also placed on industry partners and how they could work together to bring more to agents. A new program, New 2 Insurance Bootcamp, was designed for brand new individuals to the industry, or to fill the gap after licensing and before any specific designation training.

Missouri

Reaching Diamond status for the first time, 2023 was an exciting year for Missouri! They recognized the importance of education due to the burdens the hard market was placing on agencies across the state. The association expanded the catalogue of classes made available to agents, and expanded to modes people could access classes. Many classes were amended to a hybrid format to fit into the busy schedules of agents. Select classes were hosted live in the association's office in Jefferson City and streamed to agents who registered to attend. Association staff worked with the Missouri Department of Commerce & Insurance to modify policies regulating CE credits in an effort to make it easier for member agents to gain credit for course completion.

New Mexico

Nine-time Diamond recipient New Mexico partnered with the Florida Insurance School. This collaboration allowed them to offer live/virtual courses throughout the year, led by exceptional instructors who could provide the best coverage solutions. They also partnered with ABEN to provide more on-demand video courses and trainings to agents. In conjunction with the Annual Convention, a live CE event showcased innovative approaches to hiring talent and better understanding client's needs and concerns. IdealTraits also presented on their tools and resources for talent acquisition.

Ohio

Five-time Diamond recipient Ohio expanded their learning portal, which initially launched in January 2023. Their offerings include on-demand courses, custom pre-paid partnership, one-click webinar registration, and more has made the state association a leader for CE. Webinar Wednesdays, originally started during COVID, continued throughout the year. There were 24 webinars, which were free to members and content was approved for CE. Finally, the PD and Advocacy team worked diligently to get a polling law changed from three polls per hour to two polls, which was a big win for the state!

Oregon

In its ninth year as a Diamond recipient, Oregon saw great success with their in-person instruction. The Premier Partners for the association went out of their way to share information about education events

and host content for non-members. This provided a channel to grow membership through first-hand experiences. By offering in-person seminars, online workshops, and other educational initiatives, Big I Oregon focused on delivering high-quality content that addressed industry trends, regulatory changes, and best practices.

Pennsylvania

As an eight-time Diamond recipient, Pennsylvania created a professional training schedule that included in-person and online courses. In 2023, CIC, CISR, and James K. Ruble seminars, and P&C licensing courses were highly attended in-person. All other trainings were offered virtually. 281 courses were delivered to 7,838 attendees, and over 200 insurance producers earned professional designations. The first IA&B Conference was held in March 2023 and engaged 130 attendees from 36 independent agencies and 11 carriers. The Young Agents Conference also had 130 attendees from 59 independent agencies and nine carriers.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island, reaching Diamond level for the third time, expanded their education offerings by partnering with other states. This led to offering more designations, more topics, and a variety of instructions. They were able to offer the IA-MBA program by partnering with Goalmakers. In addition, new on-demand content was uploaded through webinar for members to receive their CE credits at their convenience. Classes were added with content such as cyber, AI, and cannabis to educate on relevant topics. Rhode Island also trained candidates from across the country in a P&C course. Once licensed, they were placed into offices all over the country.

Tennessee

Five-time Diamond recipient Tennessee continued to offer hybrid program offerings to members and non-members. This helped the association increase education revenues and reach a broader audience. Tennessee also partnered with the Insurance and Risk Management program at Middle Tennessee State University by participating in career days and inviting students to conferences and professional events. The opportunity to earn CE credits was implemented at the Annual Convention and Young Agents conference. The ABEN MLIS program was added to their catalogue, and they promoted education opportunities through WINS (Professional Women in Insurance).

Texas

As a six-time Diamond recipient, Texas faced a new challenge in 2023 when the TIIA designation classes were taken off their calendar. They partnered with New Level Partners to create LEAD (Leadership Excellence and Development Series), which has been very successful. This series provided information about strengthening leadership foundation, learning essential techniques, and collaborating with fellow front-line leaders to gain valuable insights. Their Agency Management Series Lunch and Learn was implemented last year and gained a lot of traction. It focused on developing small agency owners and managers.

Vermont

Vermont, reaching Diamond level for the seventh time this year, partnered with Rhode Island to offer education opportunities to members. They were able to offer more designations, more topics, and different instructors. They were able to offer the IA-MBA program by partnering with Goalmakers. In addition, new on-demand content was uploaded through webinar for members to receive their CE credits at their convenience. Classes were added with content such as cyber, AI, and cannabis to educate on relevant topics.

GOLD

Iowa

Iowa, achieving Gold for the third time in 2023, went back to the drawing board to find ways to bring agents together in-person for live classes. Their Education Committee created a survey and sent out to members with questions about what type of content people would like to see, where they are currently getting CE, and what would encourage participation in a live class. Iowa also offers The Elite Force Sales Program, designed to help new producers who have a basic understanding of sales, but can expand their knowledge to become production superstars. Events hosted by the state include: Insurance Day On The Hill, Rural Agents Conference, Young Agents Conference, and Big I Convention and Trade Show.

Nevada

In its third year as a Gold level award recipient, Nevada continues to lead professional development opportunities for independent agents across the state. In addition to promoting Virtual University and online classes with ABEN, Nevada promoted the Emerging Leaders Professional Development series which includes four 3-hour in-person classes. These all qualify for professional development, six hours of CE, and credit for Swiss Re E&O policy holders. Nevada also hosted an annual tradeshow and a separate convention where members were introduced to carriers, industry partners, and keynote speakers who shared skillsets, knowledge, and leadership qualities members could take back to their agencies.