

**2021–2022**



**Business/NP  
Engagement Level  
Criteria  
for Performance  
Excellence**

**Effective December 2020**

## Note from the CEO:

Thank you for taking the time to consider applying for the Quality Texas Foundation Pioneer Level of Recognition (five-page Organizational Profile). This is the starting point for your organization or a section/group within an organization. Your next step is our Engagement Level of Recognition (five-page Organizational Profile + 10-page application). Since this is probably your first entry with Quality Texas Foundation, welcome aboard. Remember this is a Journey, NOT a Destination.

It is our sincere hope that the questions embedded in the five-page Organizational Profile will cause your organization to evaluate exactly where you are, where you should be, and how you can significantly improve by prioritization of your improvement steps. The Baldrige Framework is used the world over to make systematic improvements to organizations. Proposed steps are shown below.

1) Assign a minimum of two personnel, preferably five to seven in your office to become Internal Coach/Examiners trained by the Quality Texas Foundation (see [www.quality-texas.org/training](http://www.quality-texas.org/training) for dates and locations). This training is where QTF teaches your personnel how to become valued Internal Coaches/Examiners by informing the participants how to respond/write the responses to the questions and the reasons behind the questions. QTF teaches the test! You can just begin writing if you like, but past information received from applicants indicate the Internal Coach/Examiner training was a major milestone in writing at any level. Our satisfaction rate over the past six years is 98.9%.

2) Write your responses to the questions and allow other people in your office to edit your work. Don't fall in love with your first draft. This application to be really effective will undergo several iterations with substantial improvements along the way. The application process will allow the organization to ask very difficult questions and address organizational priorities.

3) Revise multiple times and submit to QTF ([www.quality-texas.org](http://www.quality-texas.org)).

4) QTF is here to help! If you need assistance, QTF can provide you with coaching and with a customized writing seminar just for your organization

If QTF can be of assistance to you, please allow us that opportunity. QTF wants to be your go to source for Baldrige-based training and Category training. QTF has leadership development, organizational strategic planning, customer, service, information management and building a learning organization around data, workforce engagement training, and several others. Remember always that the Baldrige Journey is never finished! Happy travels!

Dr. Mac McGuire

CEO

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## How do I get started?

However you plan use the Baldrige framework, the Baldrige community is there to help your organization learn, grow, and improve. See the following pages and visit <https://www.quality-texas.org> to see the possibilities.

*The [Baldrige] Criteria help you link your strategy, your human capital process, your leadership development process, and all of your core operations together and help them focus on what your customers actually want.*

*—Scott McIntyre, President and CEO, Managing Partner, Guidehouse (formerly Baldrige Award recipient PricewaterhouseCoopers Public Sector Practice)*

## How to Use the Baldrige Excellence Framework

Whether your organization is large or small, you can use the Baldrige Excellence Framework for improvement. Your experience with Baldrige will help you decide where to begin.

The Quality Texas Foundation can help you assess your level of expertise and where your journey should begin. Please contact Lin Wrinkle-McGuire, COO, at [linwrinkle@quality-texas.org](mailto:linwrinkle@quality-texas.org) Dwight Bailey, at [dwrightbailey@quality-texas.org](mailto:dwrightbailey@quality-texas.org) or Dr. Mac McGuire, CEO at [drmac@quality-texas.org](mailto:drmac@quality-texas.org) for more information.

There are three different applications. Business/NFP is the most often used. Healthcare has a healthcare version if the primary customers are patients and families. Education has an education version if the primary customers are students and families.

# Criteria for Performance Excellence

## Begin with the Organizational Profile

The Organizational Profile is the most appropriate starting point for self-assessment and for writing an application. It is critically important for the following reasons:

- You can use it as an initial self-assessment. If you identify topics for which conflicting, little, or no information is available, use these topics for action planning.
- It sets the context for understanding your organization and how it operates and allows you to address unique aspects of your organization in your responses to the Baldrige Criteria questions in categories 1–7. Your responses to all other questions in the Criteria should relate to the organizational context you describe in this profile.
- It helps you identify gaps in key information about your organization and focus on key performance requirements and results.

## Organizational Profile

The **Organizational Profile** is a snapshot of your organization and its strategic environment.

### P.1 Organizational Description: What are your key organizational characteristics?

#### a. Organizational Environment

**(1) Product Offerings** What are your main product offerings (see the note on the next page)? What is the relative importance of each to your success? What mechanisms do you use to deliver your products?

**(2) Mission, Vision, Values, and Culture** What are your mission, vision, and values? Other than values, what are the characteristics of your organizational culture, if any? What are your organization's core competencies, and what is their relationship to your mission?

**(3) Workforce Profile** What is your workforce profile? What recent changes have you experienced in workforce composition or in your needs with regard to your workforce? What are

- your workforce or employee groups and segments;
- the educational requirements for different employee groups and segments;
- the key drivers that engage them;
- your organized bargaining units (union representation), if any; and
- your special health and safety requirements, if any?

**(4) Assets** What are your major facilities, equipment, technologies, and intellectual property?

**(5) Regulatory Environment** What are your key applicable occupational health and safety regulations; accreditation, certification, or registration requirements; industry standards; and environmental, financial, and product regulations?

## **b. Organizational Relationships**

**(1) Organizational Structure** What are your organizational leadership structure and governance structure? What structures and mechanisms make up your organization’s leadership system? What are the reporting relationships among your governance board, senior leaders, and parent organization, as appropriate?

**(2) Customers and Stakeholders** What are your KEY market SEGMENTS, CUSTOMER groups, and STAKEHOLDER groups, as appropriate? What are their KEY requirements and expectations for your products, customer support services, and operations, including any differences among the groups?

**(3) Suppliers, Partners, and Collaborators** What are your KEY types of suppliers, PARTNERS, and COLLABORATORS? What role do they play in producing and delivering your key products and customer support services, and in enhancing your competitiveness? What role do they play in contributing and implementing innovations in your organization? What are your key supply-network requirements?

### **Notes**

**P.1a(1).** Product offerings are the goods and services you offer in the marketplace. Mechanisms for delivering products to your customers might be direct or might be indirect, through dealers, distributors, collaborators, or channel partners. *Nonprofit (including government) organizations might refer to their product offerings as programs, projects, or services.*

**P.1a(2).** If your organization has a stated purpose as well as a mission, you should include it in your response. Some organizations define a mission and a purpose, and some use the terms interchangeably. In some organizations, purpose refers to the fundamental reason that the organization exists. Its role is to inspire the organization and guide its setting of values.

**P.1a(2).** Your values are part of your organization’s culture. Other characteristics of your organizational culture might include shared beliefs and norms that contribute to the uniqueness of the environment within your organization.

**P.1a(3).** Workforce or employee groups and segments (including organized bargaining units) might be based on type of employment or contract-reporting relationship, location (including telework), tour of duty, work environment, use of certain family-friendly policies, or other factors. Organizations that also rely on volunteers

and interns to accomplish their work should include these groups as part of their workforce.

**P.1a(5).** In the Criteria, industry refers to the sector in which you operate. Industry standards might include industrywide codes of conduct and policy guidance. *For nonprofit (including government) organizations, this sector might be charitable organizations, professional associations and societies, religious organizations, or government entities—or a subsector of one of these.* Depending on the regions in which you operate, environmental regulations might cover greenhouse gas emissions, carbon regulations and trading, and energy efficiency.

**P.1b(1).** The governance or oversight structure for privately held businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies may comprise an advisory board, a family council, or local/regional leaders who are assembled to provide guidance. *For some nonprofit (including government) organizations, governance and reporting relationships might include relationships with major funding sources, such as granting agencies, legislatures, or foundations.*

**P.1b(1).** The Organizational Profile asks for the “what” of your leadership system (its structures and mechanisms). Questions in categories 1 and 5 ask how the system is used.

**P.1b(2).** *For some nonprofit (including government) organizations, customers might include members, taxpayers, citizens, recipients, clients, and beneficiaries, and market segments might be referred to as constituencies. For government agencies, the legislature (as a source of funds) may be a key stakeholder.*

**P.1b(2).** Customer groups might be based on common expectations, behaviors, preferences, or profiles. Within a group, there may be customer segments based on differences, commonalities, or both. You might subdivide your market into segments based on product lines or features, distribution channels, business volume, geography, or other defining factors.

**P.1b(2).** Customer, stakeholder, and operational requirements and expectations will drive your organization's sensitivity to the risk of product, service, support, and supply-network interruptions, including those due to natural disasters and other emergencies.

**P.1b(3).** Your supply network consists of the entities involved in producing your products and services and delivering them to your customers. For some organizations, these entities form a chain, in which one entity directly supplies another. Increasingly, however, these entities are interlinked and exist in interdependent rather than linear relationships. The Criteria use the term supply network, rather than supply chain, to emphasize the interdependencies among organizations and their suppliers.

*For additional guidance on this item, see the Criteria Commentary (<https://www.nist.gov/baldrige/baldrige-criteria-commentary>).*

## **P.2 Organizational Situation: What is your organization's strategic situation?**

### **a. Competitive Environment**

**(1) Competitive Position** What are your relative size and growth in your industry or the markets you serve? How many and what types of competitors do you have?

**(2) Competitiveness Changes** What key changes, if any, are affecting your competitive situation, including changes that create opportunities for innovation and collaboration, as appropriate?

**(3) Comparative Data** What key sources of comparative and competitive data are available from within your industry? What key sources of comparative data are available from outside your industry? What limitations, if any, affect your ability to obtain or use these data?

### **b. Strategic Context**

What are your key strategic challenges and advantages?

### **c. Performance Improvement System**

What is your performance improvement system, including your processes for evaluation and improvement of key organizational projects and processes?

## **Notes**

**P.2a.** *Nonprofit organizations must often compete with other organizations and alternative sources of similar services to secure financial and volunteer resources, membership, visibility in appropriate communities, and media attention.*

**P.2b.** Strategic challenges and advantages might be in the areas of business, operations, societal contributions, and workforce. They might relate to products, finances, organizational structure and culture, emerging technology, digital integration, security and cybersecurity, emerging competitors, changing stakeholder requirements, workforce capability or capacity, brand recognition and reputation, your supply network, globalization, and the environment and climate. *Throughout the Criteria, "business" refers to a nonprofit (or government) organization's main mission area or enterprise activity.*

**P.2c.** The Baldrige Scoring System uses performance improvement through learning and integration as a dimension in assessing the maturity of organizational approaches and their deployment. This question is intended to set an overall context for your approach to performance improvement. The approach you use should be related to your organization's needs. Approaches that are compatible with the overarching systems approach provided by the Baldrige framework might include implementing a Lean Enterprise System, applying Six Sigma methodology, using PDCA methodology, using standards from ISO (e.g., the 9000 or 14000 series, or sector-specific standards), using decision science, or employing other improvement tools.

*For additional guidance on this item, see the Criteria Commentary (<https://www.nist.gov/baldrige/baldrige-criteria-commentary>).*

# 1 Leadership

**The Leadership category asks how senior leaders' personal actions guide and sustain your organization. It also asks about your organization's governance system and how your organization fulfills its legal, ethical, and societal responsibilities.**

**Vision and Values, Communication and Organizational Performance,  
Organizational Governance, Legal and Ethical Behavior, and Societal  
Responsibilities**

**Process**

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- (1) How do senior leaders set your organization's vision and values?
  - (2) How do senior leaders' actions create an environment for success now and in the future?
  - (3) How do senior leaders communicate with and engage the entire workforce and key customers?
  - (4) How do senior leaders create a focus on action that will achieve the organization's mission?
  - (5) How do you evaluate the performance of your senior leaders, including the chief executive, and your governance board?

## 2 Strategy

**The STRATEGY Category asks HOW your organization develops STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and ACTION PLANS, implements them, changes them if circumstances require, and measures progress.**

**Strategy Development Process, Innovation, Strategy Considerations, Work Systems and Core Competencies, Strategic Objectives, and Action Plans including modification of Action Plans**

**Process**

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- (1) How do you conduct your strategic planning?
  - (2) How does your strategy development process stimulate and incorporate innovation?
  - (3) How do you collect and analyze relevant data and develop information for your strategy planning process?
  - (4) What are your organization's key strategic objectives and timetable for achieving them?
  - (5) How do your strategic objectives achieve appropriate balance among varying and potentially completing organizational needs?

## 3 Customer

**The Customers category asks how your organization engages its customers for ongoing marketplace success, including how your organization listens to the VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER, serves and exceeds CUSTOMERS' expectations, and builds long-term customer relationships.**

**Customers Listening, Customer Segmentation, Determination of Customer Satisfaction and Engagement, Product Offerings and Customer Experience, Customer Relationships, Complaint Management** **Process**

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- (1) How do you listen to, interact with, and observe customers to obtain actionable information?
- (2) How do you listen to potential customers to obtain actionable information?
- (3) How do you determine customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement?
- (4) How do you obtain information on customers' satisfaction with your organization relative to other organizations?
- (5) How do you determine product offerings?

## 4 Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

**The Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management category asks how your organization selects, gathers, analyzes, manages, and improves its data, information, and knowledge assets; how it uses review findings to improve its performance; and how it learns.**

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### Measurement, Analysis, Improvement of Organizational Performance, Information and Knowledge Management

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**Process**

- (1) How do you use data and information to track daily operations and overall organizational performance?
- (2) How do you select and effectively use comparative data and information?
- (3) How do you review your organization's performance and capabilities?
- (4) How do you build and manage organizational knowledge?
- (5) How do you use your knowledge and resources to embed learning in the way your organization operates?

## 5 Workforce

**The Workforce category asks how your organization assesses WORKFORCE CAPABILITY and CAPACITY needs and builds a WORKFORCE environment conducive to HIGH PERFORMANCE. The category also asks HOW your organization engages, manages, and develops your WORKFORCE to utilize its full potential in alignment with your organization's overall business needs.**

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### Workforce Environment, Workforce Capability and Capacity, Workforce Climate, Workforce Engagement and Performance, and Workforce and Leader Development

**Process**

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- (1) How do you assess your workforce capability and capacity needs?
- (2) How do you recruit, hire, place, and retain new workforce members?
- (3) How do you organize and manage your workforce?
- (4) How do you determine the key drivers of workforce engagement?
- (5) How does your learning and development system support the personal development of workforce members and your organization's needs?

## 6 Operations

**The Operations category asks how your organization designs, manages, improves, and innovates its products and WORK PROCESSES and improves operational EFFECTIVENESS to deliver customer VALUE and achieve ongoing organizational success.**

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### Work Processes and Operational Effectiveness

### Process

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- (1) How do you determine key product and work process requirements?
- (2) How do you design your products and work processes to meet requirements?
- (3) How does your day-to-day operation of work processes ensure that they meet key process requirements?
- (4) How do you determine your key support processes?
- (5) How do you pursue your opportunities for innovation?

## 7 Results

**The Results category asks about your organization's performance and improvement in all key areas—product and PROCESS RESULTS, CUSTOMER RESULTS, WORKFORCE RESULTS, leadership and GOVERNANCE RESULTS, and financial, market, and strategy RESULTS. The category asks about performance levels relative to those of competitors and other organizations with similar product offerings.**

### Tracking and Using Key Results for More Improvement and Analysis

Display in graphical form where possible (chart/graph/table) where possible. There should be a minimum of one chart/graph/table for each question below.

**Results**

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- (1) What are your results for your products and your customer service processes?
  - (2) What are your safety and emergency preparedness results?
  - (3) What are your customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction results?
  - (4) What are your customer engagement results?
  - (5) What are your workforce capability and capacity results?
  - (6) What are your workforce and leader development results?
  - (7) What are your results for senior leaders' communication and engagement with the workforce, partners, and customers?
  - (8) What are your financial performance results?



## Glossary of Key Terms

*The terms below are those in small caps in the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence and scoring guidelines. The rest of the first paragraph elaborates on this definition. The paragraphs that follow provide examples, descriptive information, or key linkages to other information in the Baldrige framework. For additional definitions and examples, see the Baldrige Excellence Framework booklet (Business/Nonprofit, Education, or Health Care; <http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/criteria.cfm>).*

**ACTION PLANS.** Specific actions that your organization takes to reach its short- and longer-term strategic objectives. These plans specify the resources committed to and the time horizons for accomplishing the plans. Action plan development is the critical stage in planning when you make strategic objectives and goals specific so that you can effectively deploy them throughout the organization in an understandable way. In the Criteria, deploying action plans includes creating aligned measures for all affected departments and work units. Deployment might also require specialized training for some workforce members or recruitment of personnel.

For example, a strategic objective for a supplier in a highly competitive industry might be to develop and maintain price leadership. Action plans could entail designing efficient processes, creating an accounting system that tracks activity-level costs, and aligning processes and accounting systems across the organization. To deploy the action plans, the supplier might need to train work units and teams in setting priorities based on costs and benefits. Organizational-level analysis and review would likely emphasize productivity growth, cost control, and quality.

See also STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.

**ALIGNMENT.** A state of consistency among plans, processes, information, resource decisions, workforce capability and capacity, actions, results, and analyses that support key organization-wide goals. Effective alignment requires a common understanding of purposes and goals. It also requires the use of

complementary measures and information for planning, tracking, analysis, and improvement at three levels: the organizational level, the key process level, and the work unit level.

See also INTEGRATION.

**ANECDOTAL.** In a response to a Criteria item, information that lacks specific methods; measures; deployment mechanisms; and evaluation, improvement, and learning factors. Anecdotal information frequently consists of examples and describes individual activities rather than systematic processes. For example, in an anecdotal response to how senior leaders deploy performance expectations, you might describe a specific occasion when a senior leader visited all of your organization's facilities. On the other hand, in properly describing a systematic process, you might include the methods all senior leaders use to communicate performance expectations regularly to all locations and workforce members, the measures leaders use to assess the effectiveness of the methods, and the tools and techniques you use to evaluate and improve the methods.

See also SYSTEMATIC.

**APPROACH.** The methods your organization uses to carry out its processes. Besides the methods themselves, approach refers to the appropriateness of the methods to the item requirements and your organization's operating environment, as well as how effectively your organization uses those methods.

Approach is one of the factors considered in evaluating process items. For further description, see the Scoring System (pages 31–36).

**BASIC REQUIREMENTS.** The most central concept of a Criteria item, as presented in the item title question. For an illustration, see Criteria for Performance Excellence Structure (page 2).

**BENCHMARKS.** Processes and results that represent the best practices and best performance for similar activities, inside or outside your organization’s industry. Organizations engage in benchmarking to understand the current dimensions of world-class performance and to achieve discontinuous (nonincremental) or “breakthrough” improvement.

**CAPABILITY, WORKFORCE.** See workforce capability.

**CAPACITY, WORKFORCE.** See workforce capacity.

**COLLABORATORS.** Organizations or individuals who cooperate with your organization to support a particular activity or event or who cooperate intermittently when their short-term goals are aligned with or are the same as yours. Typically, collaborations do not involve formal agreements or arrangements.

See also partners.

**CORE COMPETENCIES.** Your organization’s areas of greatest expertise; those strategically important, possibly specialized capabilities that are central to fulfilling your mission or that provide an advantage in your marketplace or service environment. Core competencies are frequently challenging for competitors or suppliers and partners to imitate, and they may provide an ongoing competitive advantage. The absence of a needed core competency may result in a significant strategic challenge or disadvantage for your organization in the marketplace.

Core competencies may involve technological expertise, unique service offerings, a marketplace niche, or business acumen in a particular area (e.g., business acquisitions).

**CUSTOMER.** An actual or potential user of your organization’s products, programs, or services (all referred to as products in the Criteria). Customers include the end users of your products, as well as others who are immediate purchasers or users, such as distributors, agents, or organizations that process your product as a component of theirs. The Baldrige framework addresses customers broadly, referencing your current and future customers, as well as your competitors’ customers.

Customer-focused excellence is a Baldrige core value embedded in the beliefs and behaviors of high-performing organizations. Customer focus impacts and should be a factor in integrating your organization’s strategic directions, work systems and work processes, and business results.

See also stakeholders for the relationship between customers and others who might be affected by your products.

**CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT.** Your customers’ investment in or commitment to your brand and product offerings. It is based on your ongoing ability to serve their needs and build relationships so that they will continue using your products. Characteristics of engaged customers include retention, brand loyalty, willingness to make an effort to do business—and increase their business—with you, and willingness to actively advocate for and recommend your brand and product offerings.

**CYCLE TIME.** The time required to fulfill commitments or complete tasks. Cycle time refers to all aspects of time performance, such as time to market, order fulfillment time, delivery time, changeover time, customer response time, and other key

measures of time. Improvement in cycle time might involve any or all of these.

Time performance and speed are important to improving competitiveness and overall performance.

**DEPLOYMENT.** The extent to which your organization applies an approach in addressing the requirements of a Criteria item. Evaluation of deployment considers how broadly and deeply the approach is applied in relevant work units throughout your organization.

Deployment is one of the factors considered in evaluating process items. For further description, see the Scoring System (pages 31–36).

**DIVERSITY.** Personal differences among workforce members that enrich the work environment and are representative of your hiring and customer communities. These differences address many variables, such as race, religion, color, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, age and generation, education, geographic origin, and skill characteristics, as well as ideas, thinking, academic disciplines, and perspectives.

The Criteria refer to valuing and benefiting from the diversity of your workforce hiring and customer communities. Capitalizing on both in building your workforce increases your opportunities for high performance; customer, workforce, and community satisfaction; and customer and workforce engagement.

**EFFECTIVE.** How well a process or a measure addresses its intended purpose. Determining effectiveness requires (1) evaluating how well the process is aligned with the organization's needs and how well it is deployed, or (2) evaluating the outcome of the measure as an indicator of process or product performance.

**EMPOWERMENT.** Giving people the authority and responsibility to make decisions and take actions. When people are

empowered, decisions are made closest to the front line, where work-related knowledge and understanding reside.

The purpose of empowering people is to enable them to satisfy customers on first contact, improve processes and increase productivity, and improve your organization's performance results, as well as to encourage collaboration. An empowered workforce requires information to make appropriate decisions; thus, your organization must provide that information in a timely and useful way.

**ENGAGEMENT, CUSTOMER.** See CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT.

**ENGAGEMENT, WORKFORCE.** See WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT.

**ETHICAL BEHAVIOR.** The actions your organization takes to ensure that all its decisions, actions, and stakeholder interactions conform to its moral and professional principles of conduct. These principles should support all applicable laws and regulations and are the foundation for your organization's culture and values. They distinguish right from wrong.

Senior leaders should be role models for these principles of behavior. The principles apply to all people involved in your organization, from temporary workforce members to members of the board of directors. These principles benefit from regular communication and reinforcement. Although the Baldrige framework does not prescribe a particular model for ensuring ethical behavior, senior leaders have the responsibility for the alignment of your organization's mission and vision with its ethical principles. Ethical behavior encompasses interactions with all stakeholders, including your workforce, shareholders, customers, partners, suppliers, and local community.

Well-designed and clearly articulated ethical principles empower people to make effective decisions with great confidence. In some

organizations, ethical principles also serve as boundary conditions restricting behavior that otherwise could have adverse impacts on your organization and/or society.

See also the related core value, Ethics and Transparency (page 44).

**EXCELLENCE.** See *PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE*.

**GOALS.** Future conditions or performance levels that your organization intends or desires to attain. Goals can be both short and longer term. They are ends that guide actions. Quantitative goals, frequently referred to as targets, include a numerical point or range. Targets might be desired performance based on comparative or competitive data. Stretch goals are goals for desired major, discontinuous (nonincremental) or “breakthrough” improvements, usually in areas most critical to your organization’s future success.

Goals can serve many purposes, including clarifying strategic objectives and action plans to indicate how you will measure success, fostering teamwork by focusing on a common end,

encouraging out-of-the-box thinking (innovation) to achieve a stretch goal, and providing a basis for measuring and accelerating progress.

See also *PERFORMANCE PROJECTIONS*.

**GOVERNANCE.** The system of management and controls exercised in the stewardship of your organization. Governance includes the responsibilities of your organization’s owners/shareholders, board of directors, and senior leaders. Corporate or organizational charters, bylaws, and policies document the rights and responsibilities of each of the parties and describe how they will direct and control your organization to ensure (1) accountability to owners/shareholders and other stakeholders, (2) transparency of operations, and (3) fair treatment of all stakeholders. Governance processes may include the approval of strategic direction, the monitoring and

evaluation of the CEO’s performance, the establishment of executive compensation and benefits, succession planning, financial and other fiduciary auditing, risk management, disclosure, and shareholder reporting. Ensuring effective governance is important to stakeholders’ and the larger society’s trust and to organizational effectiveness.

**HIGH PERFORMANCE.** Ever-higher levels of overall organizational and individual performance, including quality, productivity, innovation rate, and cycle time. High performance results in improved service and value for customers and other stakeholders.

Approaches to high performance vary in their form, their function, and the incentive systems used. High performance stems from and enhances workforce engagement. It involves cooperation between the management and the workforce, which may involve workforce bargaining units; cooperation among work units, often involving teams; empowerment of your people, including personal accountability; and workforce input into planning. It may involve learning and building individual and organizational skills; learning from other organizations; creating flexible job design and work assignments; maintaining a flattened organizational structure, where decision making is decentralized and decisions are made closest to the front line; and effectively using performance measures, including comparisons. Many organizations encourage high performance with monetary and nonmonetary incentives based on factors such as organizational performance, team and individual contributions, and skill building. Also, approaches to high performance usually seek to align your organization’s structure, core competencies, work, jobs, workforce development, and incentives.

**HOW.** The systems and processes that your organization uses to achieve its mission requirements. In responding to “how” questions in Criteria categories 1–6, you should include information on approach (methods and measures), deployment, learning, and integration.

**INDICATORS.** See measures and indicators.

**INNOVATION.** Making meaningful change to improve products, processes, or organizational effectiveness and create new value for stakeholders. Innovation involves adopting an idea, process, technology, product, or business model that is either new or new to its proposed application. The outcome of innovation is a discontinuous or “breakthrough” improvement in results, products, or processes. Innovation benefits from a supportive environment, a process for identifying strategic opportunities, and a willingness to pursue intelligent risks.

Successful organizational innovation is a multistep process of development and knowledge sharing, a decision to implement, implementation, evaluation, and learning. Although innovation is often associated with technological innovation, it is applicable to all key organizational processes that can benefit from change through innovation, whether breakthrough improvement or a change in approach or outputs. Innovation could include fundamental changes in an organization’s structure or business model to accomplish work more effectively.

See also INTELLIGENT RISKS and STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES.

**INTEGRATION.** The harmonization of plans, processes, information, resource decisions, workforce capability and capacity, actions, results, and analyses to support key organization-wide goals. Effective integration goes beyond alignment and is achieved when the individual components of an organizational performance management system operate as a fully interconnected unit.

Integration is one of the factors considered in evaluating both process and results items. For further description, see the Scoring System (pages 31–36).

See also ALIGNMENT.

**INTELLIGENT RISKS.** Opportunities for which the potential gain outweighs the potential

harm or loss to your organization’s future success if you do not explore them. Taking intelligent risks requires a tolerance for failure and an expectation that innovation is not achieved by initiating only successful endeavors. At the outset, organizations must invest in potential successes while realizing that some will lead to failure.

The degree of risk that is intelligent to take will vary by the pace and level of threat and opportunity in the industry. In a rapidly changing industry with constant introductions of new products, processes, or business models, there is an obvious need to invest more resources in intelligent risks than in a stable industry. In the latter, organizations must monitor and explore growth potential and change but, most likely, with a less significant commitment of resources.

See also STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES.

**KEY.** Major or most important; critical to achieving your intended outcome. The Criteria, for example, refer to key challenges, plans, work processes, and measures—those that are most important to your organization’s success. They are the essential elements for pursuing or monitoring a desired outcome. Key is generally defined as around the most significant five (e.g., around five key challenges).

**KNOWLEDGE ASSETS.** Your organization’s accumulated intellectual resources; the knowledge possessed by your organization and its workforce in the form of information, ideas, learning, understanding, memory, insights, cognitive and technical skills, and capabilities. These knowledge assets reside in your workforce, software, patents, databases, documents, guides, policies and procedures, and technical drawings. Knowledge assets also reside within customers, suppliers, and partners.

Knowledge assets are the know-how that your organization has available to use, invest, and grow. Building and managing knowledge assets are key components of creating value

for your stakeholders and sustaining a competitive advantage.

**LEADERSHIP SYSTEM.** The way leadership is exercised, formally and informally, throughout your organization; the basis for key decisions and the way they are made, communicated, and carried out. A leadership system includes structures and mechanisms for making decisions; ensuring two-way communication; selecting and developing leaders and managers; and reinforcing values, ethical behavior, directions, and performance expectations.

An effective leadership system respects workforce members' and other stakeholders' capabilities and requirements, and it sets high expectations for performance and performance improvement. It builds loyalties and teamwork based on your organization's vision and values and the pursuit of shared goals. It encourages and supports initiative, innovation, and appropriate risk taking; subordinates organizational structure to purpose and function; and avoids chains of command that require long decision paths. An effective leadership system includes mechanisms for leaders to conduct self-examination, receive feedback, and improve.

**LEARNING.** New knowledge or skills acquired through evaluation, study, experience, and innovation. The Baldrige framework refers to two distinct kinds of learning: organizational learning and learning by the people in your workforce. Organizational learning is achieved through research and development, evaluation and improvement cycles, ideas and input from the workforce and stakeholders, the sharing of best practices, and benchmarking. Workforce learning is achieved through education, training, and developmental opportunities that further individual growth.

To be effective, learning should be embedded in the way your organization operates. Learning contributes to a competitive advantage and ongoing success for your organization and workforce.

For further description of organizational and personal learning, see the related core values and concepts: Valuing People, and Organizational Learning and Agility (page 41).

Learning is one of the factors considered in evaluating process items. For further description, see the Scoring System (pages 31–36).

**LEVELS.** Numerical information that places or positions your organization's results and performance on a meaningful measurement scale. Performance levels permit evaluation relative to past performance, projections, goals, and appropriate comparisons.

**MEASURES AND INDICATORS.** Numerical information that quantifies the input, output, and performance dimensions of processes, products, programs, projects, services, and the overall organization (outcomes). Measures and indicators might be simple (derived from one measurement) or composite.

The Criteria do not distinguish between measures and indicators. However, some users of these terms prefer "indicator" (1) when the measurement relates to performance but does not measure it directly (e.g., the number of complaints is an indicator but not a direct measure of dissatisfaction) and (2) when the measurement is a predictor ("leading indicator") of some more significant performance (e.g., increased customer satisfaction might be a leading indicator of market share gain).

**MISSION.** Your organization's overall function. The mission answers the question, "What is your organization attempting to accomplish?" The mission might define customers or markets served, distinctive or core competencies, or technologies used.

**MULTIPLE REQUIREMENTS.** The details of a Criteria item, as expressed in the individual questions under each lettered area to address. The first question in a set of multiple requirements expresses the most important

question in that group. The questions that follow expand on or supplement that question. For an illustration, see Criteria for Performance Excellence Structure (page 2).

Even high-performing, high-scoring users of the Baldrige framework are not likely to be able to address all the multiple requirements with equal capability or success.

**OVERALL REQUIREMENTS.** The most important features of a Criteria item, as elaborated in the first question (the leading question in boldface) in each paragraph under each lettered area to address. For an illustration, see Criteria for Performance Excellence Structure (page 2).

**PARTNERS.** Key organizations or individuals who are working in concert with your organization to achieve a common goal or improve performance. Typically, partnerships are formal arrangements for a specific aim or purpose, such as to achieve a strategic objective or deliver a specific product.

Formal partnerships usually last for an extended period and involve a clear understanding of the partners' individual and mutual roles and benefits.

See also collaborators.

**PERFORMANCE.** Outputs and their outcomes obtained from processes, products, and customers that permit you to evaluate and compare your organization's results to performance projections, standards, past results, goals, and other organizations' results. Performance can be expressed in nonfinancial and financial terms.

The Criteria address four types of performance: (1) product, (2) customer-focused, (3) operational, and (4) financial and marketplace.

Product performance is performance relative to measures and indicators of product and service characteristics that are important to customers. Examples include product reliability, on-time delivery, customer-

experienced defect levels, and service response time. For some service organizations, including nonprofit organizations, examples might include program and project performance in the areas of rapid response to emergencies, at-home services, or multilingual services.

Customer-focused performance is performance relative to measures and indicators of customers' perceptions, reactions, and behaviors. Examples include customer retention, complaints, and survey results.

Operational performance is workforce, leadership, and organizational performance (including ethical and legal compliance) relative to measures and indicators of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Examples include cycle time, productivity, waste reduction, workforce turnover, workforce cross-training rates, regulatory compliance, fiscal accountability, strategy accomplishment, and community involvement. Operational performance might be measured at the work-unit, key work process, and organizational levels.

Financial and marketplace performance is performance relative to measures of cost, revenue, and market position, including asset utilization, asset growth, and market share. Examples include returns on investments, value added per employee, debt-to-equity ratio, returns on assets, operating margins, performance to budget, the amount in reserve funds, cash-to-cash cycle time, other profitability and liquidity measures, and market gains.

**PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE.** An integrated approach to organizational performance management that results in (1) delivery of ever-improving value to customers and stakeholders, contributing to ongoing organizational success; (2) improvement of your organization's overall effectiveness and capabilities; and (3) learning for the organization and for people in the workforce. The Baldrige Organizational Profile, Criteria, core values and concepts,

and scoring guidelines provide a framework and assessment tool for understanding your organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement and, thus, for guiding your planning toward achieving higher performance and striving for excellence.

**PERFORMANCE PROJECTIONS.** Estimates of your organization's future performance. Projections should be based on an understanding of past performance, rates of improvement, and assumptions about future internal changes and innovations, as well as assumptions about changes in the external environment that result in internal changes. Thus, performance projections can serve as a key tool in managing your operations and in developing and implementing your strategy.

Performance projections state your *expected* future performance. Goals state your *desired* future performance. Performance projections for your competitors or similar organizations may indicate challenges facing your organization and areas where breakthrough performance or innovation is needed. In areas where your organization intends to achieve breakthrough performance or innovation, your performance projections and your goals may overlap.

See also GOALS.

**PROCESS.** Linked activities with the purpose of producing a product or service for a customer (user) within or outside your organization. Generally, processes involve combinations of people, machines, tools, techniques, materials, and improvements in a defined series of steps or actions. Processes rarely operate in isolation and must be considered in relation to other processes that impact them. In some situations, processes might require adherence to a specific sequence of steps, with documentation (sometimes formal) of procedures and requirements, including well-defined measurement and control steps.

In the delivery of services, particularly those that directly involve customers, process is used more generally to spell out what delivering that service entails, possibly

including a preferred or expected sequence. If a sequence is critical, the process needs to include information that helps customers understand and follow the sequence. Such service processes also require guidance for service providers on handling contingencies related to customers' possible actions or behaviors.

In knowledge work, such as strategic planning, research, development, and analysis, process does not necessarily imply formal sequences of steps. Rather, it implies general understandings of competent performance in such areas as timing, options to include, evaluation, and reporting. Sequences might arise as part of these understandings.

Process is one of the two dimensions evaluated in a Baldrige-based assessment. This evaluation is based on four factors: approach, deployment, learning, and integration. For further description, see the Scoring System (pages 31–36).

**PRODUCTIVITY.** Measures of the efficiency of resource use.

Although the term is often applied to single factors, such as the workforce (labor productivity), machines, materials, energy, and capital, the concept also applies to the total resources used in producing outputs. Using an aggregate measure of overall productivity allows you to determine whether the net effect of overall changes in a process—possibly involving resource trade-offs—is beneficial.

**PROJECTIONS, PERFORMANCE.** See PERFORMANCE PROJECTIONS.

**RESULTS.** Outputs and outcomes achieved by your organization. Results are evaluated based on current performance; performance relative to appropriate comparisons; the rate, breadth, and importance of performance improvements; and the relationship of results measures to key organizational performance requirements.

Results are one of the two dimensions evaluated in a Baldrige-based assessment. This evaluation is based on four factors: levels, trends, comparisons, and integration. For further description, see the Scoring System (pages 31–36).

**SEGMENT.** One part of your organization’s customer, market, product offering, or workforce base. Segments typically have common characteristics that allow logical groupings. In Criteria results items, segmentation refers to disaggregating results data in a way that allows for meaningful analysis of your organization’s performance. It is up to each organization to determine the factors that it uses to segment its customers, markets, products, and workforce.

Understanding segments is critical to identifying the distinct needs and expectations of different customer, market, and workforce groups and to tailoring product offerings to meet their needs and expectations. For example, you might segment your market based on distribution channels, business volume, geography, or technologies employed. You might segment your workforce based on geography, skills, needs, work assignments, or job classifications.

**SENIOR LEADERS.** Your organization’s senior management group or team. In many organizations, this consists of the head of the organization and his or her direct reports.

**STAKEHOLDERS.** All groups that are or might be affected by your organization’s actions and success. Key stakeholders might include customers, the workforce, partners, collaborators, governing boards, stockholders, donors, suppliers, taxpayers, regulatory bodies, policy makers, funders, and local and professional communities.

See also CUSTOMER.

**STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES.** Those marketplace benefits that exert a decisive influence on your organization’s likelihood of future success. These advantages are

frequently sources of current and future competitive success relative to other providers of similar products. Strategic advantages generally arise from either or both of two sources: (1) core competencies, which focus on building and expanding on your organization’s internal capabilities, and (2) strategically important external resources, which your organization shapes and leverages through key external relationships and partnerships.

When an organization realizes both sources of strategic advantage, it can amplify its unique internal capabilities by capitalizing on complementary capabilities in other organizations.

See STRATEGIC CHALLENGES and STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES for the relationship among strategic advantages, strategic challenges, and the strategic objectives your organization articulates to address its challenges and advantages.

**STRATEGIC CHALLENGES.** Those pressures that exert a decisive influence on your organization’s likelihood of future success. These challenges are frequently driven by your organization’s anticipated competitive position in the future relative to other providers of similar products. While not exclusively so, strategic challenges are generally externally driven. However, in responding to externally driven strategic challenges, your organization may face internal strategic challenges.

External strategic challenges may relate to customer or market needs or expectations; product or technological changes; or financial, societal, and other risks or needs. Internal strategic challenges may relate to capabilities or human and other resources.

See strategic advantages and strategic objectives for the relationship among strategic challenges, strategic advantages, and the strategic objectives your organization articulates to address its challenges and advantages.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.** The aims or responses that your organization articulates to address major change or improvement, competitiveness or social issues, and business advantages. Strategic objectives are generally focused both externally and internally and relate to significant customer, market, product, or technological opportunities and challenges (strategic challenges). Broadly stated, they are what your organization must achieve to remain or become competitive and ensure its long-term success. Strategic objectives set your organization's longer-term directions and guide resource allocation and redistribution.

See action plans for the relationship between strategic objectives and action plans and for an example of each.

**STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES.** Prospects for new or changed products, services, processes, business models (including strategic alliances), or markets. They arise from outside-the-box thinking, brainstorming, capitalizing on serendipity, research and innovation processes, nonlinear extrapolation of current conditions, and other approaches to imagining a different future.

The generation of ideas that lead to strategic opportunities benefits from an environment that encourages nondirected, free thought. Choosing which strategic opportunities to pursue involves consideration of relative risk, financial and otherwise, and then making intelligent choices (intelligent risks).

See also INTELLIGENT RISKS.

**SYSTEMATIC.** Well-ordered, repeatable, and exhibiting the use of data and information so that learning is possible. Approaches are systematic if they build in the opportunity for evaluation, improvement, and sharing, thereby permitting a gain in maturity. To see the term in use, refer to the Process Scoring Guidelines (page 34).

**TRENDS.** Numerical information that shows the direction and rate of change of your

organization's results or the consistency of its performance over time. Trends show your organization's performance in a time sequence.

Ascertaining a trend generally requires a minimum of three historical (not projected) data points. Defining a statistically valid trend requires more data points. The cycle time of the process being measured determines the time between the data points for establishing a trend. Shorter cycle times demand more frequent measurement, while longer cycle times might require longer periods for a meaningful trend.

Examples of trends called for by the Criteria and scoring guidelines include data on product performance, results for customer and workforce satisfaction and dissatisfaction, financial performance, marketplace performance, and operational performance, such as cycle time and productivity.

**VALUE.** The perceived worth of a product, process, asset, or function relative to its cost and possible alternatives.

Organizations frequently use value considerations to determine the benefits of various options relative to their costs, such as the value of various product and service combinations to customers. Your organization needs to understand what different stakeholder groups value and then deliver value to each group. This frequently requires balancing value among customers and other stakeholders, such as your workforce and the community.

**VALUES.** The guiding principles and behaviors that embody how your organization and its people are expected to operate. Values influence and reinforce your organization's desired culture. They support and guide the decisions made by every workforce member, helping your organization accomplish its mission and attain its vision appropriately. Examples of values include demonstrating integrity and fairness in all interactions, exceeding customer expectations, valuing

individuals and diversity, protecting the environment, and striving for performance excellence every day.

**VISION.** Your organization's desired future state. The vision describes where your organization is headed, what it intends to be, or how it wishes to be perceived in the future.

**VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER.** Your process for capturing customer-related information. Voice-of-the-customer processes are intended to be proactive and continuously innovative to capture stated, unstated, and anticipated customer requirements, expectations, and desires. The goal is to achieve customer engagement. Listening to the voice of the customer might include gathering and integrating various types of customer data, such as survey data, focus group findings, social media data and commentary, warranty data, marketing and sales information, and complaint data, that affect customers' purchasing and engagement decisions.

**WORK PROCESSES.** Your organization's most important internal value-creation processes. They might include product design, production, and delivery; customer support; supply-chain management; business; and support processes. They are the processes that involve the majority of your organization's workforce.

Your key work processes frequently relate to your core competencies, the factors that determine your success relative to competitors, and the factors your senior leaders consider 54 2017–2018 Baldrige Excellence Framework

important for business growth. Your key work processes are always accomplished by your workforce.

**WORK SYSTEMS.** How your organization's work is accomplished, consisting of the internal work processes and external resources you need to develop and produce products, deliver them to your customers,

and succeed in your marketplace. Work systems involve your workforce, your key suppliers and partners, your contractors, your collaborators, and other components of the supply chain needed to produce and deliver your products and carry out your business and support processes.

Decisions about work systems are strategic. These decisions involve protecting and capitalizing on core competencies and deciding what should be procured from or produced outside your organization in order to be efficient and sustainable in your marketplace.

**WORKFORCE.** All people actively supervised by your organization and involved in accomplishing your organization's work, including paid employees (e.g., permanent, part-time, temporary, and telecommuting employees, as well as contract employees supervised by your organization) and volunteers, as appropriate. Your workforce includes team leaders, supervisors, and managers at all levels.

**WORKFORCE CAPABILITY.** Your organization's ability to accomplish its work processes through its people's knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies.

Capability may include the ability to build and sustain relationships with customers; to innovate and transition to new technologies; to develop new products and work processes; and to meet changing business, market, and regulatory demands.

**WORKFORCE CAPACITY.** Your organization's ability to ensure sufficient staffing levels to accomplish its work processes and deliver your products to customers, including the ability to meet seasonal or varying demand levels.

**WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT.** The extent of workforce members' emotional and intellectual commitment to accomplishing your organization's work, mission, and vision. Organizations with high levels of workforce engagement are often characterized by high-performance work environments in which people are motivated to do their utmost for

their customers' benefit and the organization's success.

In general, workforce members feel engaged when they find personal meaning and motivation in their work and receive interpersonal and workplace support. An engaged workforce benefits from trusting relationships, a safe and cooperative

environment, good communication and information flow, empowerment, and accountability for performance. Key factors contributing to engagement include training and career development, effective recognition and reward systems, equal opportunity and fair treatment, and family-friendliness.

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