

Baldrige National Quality Program

# Getting Started with the

## *Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence*



*A Guide to Self-Assessment and Action*

*Baldrige integrates all  
the key drivers of  
organizational performance  
management within  
one holistic framework,  
allowing you to manage  
your organization as a  
system instead of  
a collection of  
individual parts.*

Joseph Muzikowski,  
Chair,  
Baldrige Panel of  
Judges, 2000–2002

Vice President,  
Business Processes  
Solvay America  
Houston, TX

## *A Guide to Self-Assessment and Action*

**Whether large or small,  
in business, education, health care, or nonprofit,  
in one location or with sites worldwide,**

your organization can benefit from conducting a self-assessment using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence and taking action for improvement.

Basing your self-assessment on the Baldrige Criteria can help your organization improve and succeed by identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement, providing a common language for improvement, and guiding organizational planning and learning.

Yet, you might hesitate to take advantage of this opportunity because you are uncertain how to start. This booklet will help you get started by introducing proven approaches, quick and simple tools, and resources for self-assessment using the Baldrige Criteria.

Read further, and take the Baldrige journey to excellence—enable your organization to be more successful than you ever imagined.

*Baldrige National Quality Program*



# Getting Started



*Are you ready to introduce the Baldrige Criteria to your organization and looking for a way to begin? Do you need to convince others in your organization of the value of conducting a Baldrige self-assessment?*

This booklet will help you learn more about the benefits of self-assessment and the many tools, approaches, and resources available to help you get started using the Baldrige Criteria.

We'll describe tools and approaches that you can use to introduce the Baldrige Criteria to your organization and to begin a self-assessment. Read on to learn about the following five options for beginning your journey to performance excellence:

# Getting Started

## 1 Use Are We Making Progress? and Are We Making Progress



### *As Leaders?*

two questionnaires that will introduce the seven Criteria Categories to your organization and help you quickly identify your strengths and opportunities for improvement

## 2 Complete e-Baldrige,



an on-line assessment tool that will help you identify gaps in your understanding of your organization and will allow you to compare your organization to others

## 3 Write the Organizational Profile,



the first step in undertaking a full self-assessment using the Baldrige Criteria

## 4 Conduct a Full Self-Assessment



using the seven Categories of the Baldrige Criteria

## 5 Proceed to Next Steps



using resources to assist you from the Baldrige National Quality Program (BNQP) and state and local programs

Organizations of all sizes have used these tools and approaches. Your organization's experience with and prior use of the Baldrige Criteria will help you decide where to begin.

## Why Self-Assess?



### *It is never too early to begin using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence.*

You do not have to wait until you are ready to apply for the Baldrige Award to begin using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. In fact, most organizations begin by using the Criteria for self-assessment and action planning. Below are a few of the many reasons for undertaking a Baldrige self-assessment and action initiative:

- Your customers, competitors, or budget are driving a need to change.
- Your environment is changing.
- Your organization is among the best, and you want to make sure you stay that way.

Using the Baldrige Criteria for self-assessment can help your organization

- jump-start change initiatives
- energize improvement initiatives
- focus your organization on common goals
- assess performance against the competition
- align your resources with your strategic objectives

# *Are We Making Progress?*



***One easy way to begin using the Baldrige Criteria is through a pair of questionnaires called *Are We Making Progress?* and *Are We Making Progress As Leaders?****

The questionnaires can help you assess your organization's progress on its journey toward performance excellence and learn what can be improved. *Are We Making Progress?* is designed to be distributed to employees to understand their perceptions, and *Are We Making Progress As Leaders?* is designed to be distributed to the organization's leadership.

The questionnaires are conveniently organized by the seven Baldrige Criteria Categories. They contain 40 questions and take about 10 minutes to complete. If your organization is new to the Baldrige Criteria, the questions—written in simple language—will help you understand the intent of the seven Criteria Categories. The questionnaires also will help you identify areas for improvement and direct you to Criteria Categories that may help you identify approaches for addressing these areas.

# Are We Making Progress?



These assessment tools will tell you if your organization is effectively setting and communicating its strategy, goals, and key messages and if the messages sent by your senior leaders are being effectively received. The answers to the questions will help you focus your improvement and communication efforts on those areas needing the most attention.

We encourage you to distribute these tools to employees, managers, supervisors, and your leadership team. You can download electronic versions of both questionnaires, as well as comparative data from the Baldrige Board of Examiners, from the BNQP Web site at [www.baldrige.nist.gov/Progress.htm](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/Progress.htm).

The questionnaires can be modified to address your specific needs, including adding questions, using language specific to your organization, or adding a personal message from your leaders.





*e-Baldrige is an on-line self-assessment tool based on the Organizational Profile, the preface to the Baldrige Criteria.*

The Organizational Profile is a series of questions that will help you create a snapshot of your organization, the key influences on how it operates, and the key challenges you face. e-Baldrige is a tool to help you take the first step toward completing the Organizational Profile.

To complete the e-Baldrige self-assessment, read and consider each question of the Organizational Profile within the context of your organization, and then determine the level of difficulty of answering each question.

**“Easy to answer”** indicates questions that would be easy for your organization to answer and on which there is widespread agreement.

**“Could answer”** indicates questions for which data are not readily available, but your organization could produce data to provide a consensus response to address this question with easy to moderate effort.



“**Difficult to answer**” indicates questions that would be difficult or impossible for your organization to answer currently and/or to reach agreement and consensus on the answer.

Completing the e-Baldrige self-assessment can

- help you determine your organization’s readiness for a full self-assessment
- reveal gaps in information and opportunities for improvement
- allow you to compare your organization to others who already have completed the e-Baldrige self-assessment
- assist with developing an action plan for improvement or continuing with a more complete self-assessment

Visit [www.baldrige.nist.gov/eBaldrige/Step\\_One.htm](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/eBaldrige/Step_One.htm) to take the e-Baldrige self-assessment. It takes just a few minutes, and you’ll be able to view a comparison of your organization with others who have completed the assessment.



# Organizational Profile



## *Write the Organizational Profile*

Completing the Organizational Profile can help ensure a common understanding of what is important for your organization, the key influences on how your organization operates, and where the organization is headed.

Many organizations start with the Organizational Profile and progress gradually to more detailed levels of self-assessment and action. If through preparing an Organizational Profile, you identify topics for which conflicting, little, or no information is available, it is possible that your first self-assessment need go no further. These gaps can be the starting point for action to develop a better understanding of your organization.

To prepare the Organizational Profile, your organization should review the questions included in the Criteria booklet on the pages entitled "Preface: Organizational Profile." Prepare responses to the two parts, "P.1 Organizational Description" and "P.2 Organizational Challenges."

# Organizational Profile

Writing the Organizational Description provides a picture of your organization. In particular, it will describe your organization's operating environment and your key relationships with customers (including students and patients, as appropriate), stakeholders, suppliers, and partners. The Organizational Challenges section calls for a description of your organization's competitive environment, your key strategic challenges, and your system for performance improvement.

Once satisfied that you have written a complete Organizational Profile, share it with all your employees. It is a great mechanism for communicating what is important to your organization. It will help everyone establish and maintain focus.

To start your Organizational Profile, download a copy of the *Criteria for Performance Excellence* for business, education, or health care from [www.baldrige.nist.gov/Criteria.htm](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/Criteria.htm).



# *Self-Assessment*



## *Conduct a Full Self-Assessment*

Organizations more experienced with the Baldrige Criteria may be ready to use the complete set of Criteria to conduct a full self-assessment. The following are six basic steps for conducting a full self-assessment:

1. Identify whether the whole organization or a specific part of it will be assessed.
2. Select champions for each of the Baldrige Categories to participate in preparing responses to the Item questions in the Categories. If they have not already done so, champions should prepare an Organizational Profile describing your organization and its challenges.
3. Champions select Category teams, which collect information and data for responding to the Criteria questions in their respective Categories.

4. Category teams share their answers to their Criteria questions with other Category teams.
5. Each Category team creates and communicates an action plan for improvement based on their answers and organizational priorities. The Self-Analysis Worksheet, available in the *Criteria for Performance Excellence* and on-line at [www.baldrige.nist.gov/Word\\_files/Optional\\_Worksheet\\_Bus.doc](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/Word_files/Optional_Worksheet_Bus.doc), can help your Category teams identify your strengths and opportunities, set priorities, and develop action plans.
6. In the final step in the process, senior leaders, champions, and teams evaluate what has been done and think about ways to improve the self-assessment process in the future.

Your organization's experience with and prior use of the Baldrige Criteria may determine whether you use an informal self-assessment or a formal approach that includes developing a written report. If you decide on an informal assessment—which many organizations have found to be a good way to start—you can complete the exercise in a one- or two-day meeting.

To begin conducting your self-assessment, visit our Web site ([www.baldrige.nist.gov](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov)) to download the *Criteria for Performance Excellence* for business, education, or health care.



## Next Steps



Now that you are familiar with some approaches and tools, it's time to conduct a self-assessment and take action for improvement. What steps can you take to prepare yourself and your organization?

1. Share this booklet with others in your organization.
2. Visit our Web site at **[www.baldrige.nist.gov](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov)** to download any of the tools or documents mentioned in this booklet and to review a complete list of available materials. Baldrige case studies and Award recipients' application summaries also are valuable resources for learning about performance improvement, and they can be downloaded from our Web site at no charge.
3. Attend The Quest for Excellence® Conference or the Baldrige regional conferences to learn more about the Baldrige Criteria. Consider having representatives from your organization attend a workshop on self-assessment, often offered in conjunction with these conferences.
4. Contact your state or local award program to learn what resources it can provide.
5. Apply to become a Baldrige Examiner or a state or local program examiner to learn from others within and outside your industry.

For additional copies of this booklet and other materials and information about BNQP conferences, state and local programs, and becoming a Baldrige Examiner, contact BNQP at 301-975-2036 or [nqp@nist.gov](mailto:nqp@nist.gov) or visit our Web site at **[www.baldrige.nist.gov](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov)**.

## *State and Local Resources*

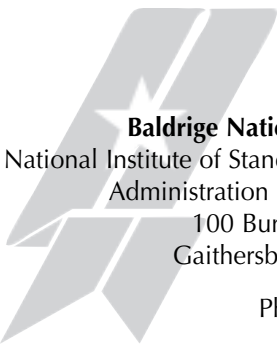
A network of state, local, and regional Baldrige-based award programs works with BNQP and can provide valuable assistance to organizations throughout their Baldrige journeys. Many of these programs provide consulting assistance in the area of self-assessment and action planning, in addition to their award program functions. Located in nearly every state and in some cities and regions, these award programs offer a variety of resources and services:

- **Award Programs:** Many of the state and local programs offer a variety of award eligibility categories and multiple application levels that enable recognition of organizations early in their improvement efforts, as well as those organizations with more mature approaches, deployment, and results. All programs provide review and feedback.
- **Training:** The state and local award programs have trained more than 7,000 examiners since 1991. Becoming an examiner at the state or local level provides valuable training and experience in understanding and using the Baldrige Criteria, knowledge that can be brought back and used in your own organization.
- **Best Practice Sharing, Conferences, and Networking:** Through conferences and other events, many state and local programs offer opportunities to learn from and network with their award recipients, examiners, and other organizations using the Criteria for self-assessment.

To find out more about state or local programs in your area visit **[www.networkforexcellence.org](http://www.networkforexcellence.org)**. This Web site provides contact information for these programs, information on state and local award recipients, and a calendar of events.

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