

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is OPE?**

The Ohio Partnership for Excellence (OPE) is the state of Ohio's performance excellence and quality program. We invite you to join with the hundreds of individuals and organizations that have already discovered this system for achieving exceptional results.

Whether you are an executive, a manager, or an employee committed to improving your organization, using the Criteria for Performance Excellence can help you prepare for the challenges occurring in today's global marketplace. Every organization is seeking to improve its results and competitive position. For over twenty years, the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence have been a significant tool for thousands of U.S. businesses, education, government, health care and non-profit organizations to assess their organizations and continuously improve performance to drive overall success. For over twenty years, the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence have been used for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

### **What are the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence?**

The Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence are a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing your organization. The Criteria are a set of challenging systems questions used by organizations to assess and measure performance through key business indicators that are most important to your organization.

The Criteria for Performance Excellence are written for several sectors:

- Business/Government/Non-profits
- Education
- Health Care

### **What are the seven categories of the Criteria for Performance Excellence?**

1. Leadership
2. Strategic Planning
3. Customer and Market Focus
4. Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management
5. Workforce Focus
6. Process Management
7. Results

### **What are the Core Values and Concepts?**

The Criteria for Performance Excellence are built on the following set of interrelated Core Values and Concepts that are vital to your organization:

- visionary leadership
- customer-driven excellence
- organizational and personal learning
- valuing workforce members and partners
- agility
- focus on the future
- managing for innovation
- management by fact
- social responsibility
- focus on results and creating value
- systems perspective

### **How can I obtain a copy of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence booklets?**

Copies may be ordered from the Baldrige National Quality Program located in Gaithersburg, MD or visit their Web site at [www.baldrige.nist.gov/Criteria.htm](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/Criteria.htm)

### **Why choose the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence and OPE?**

Organizations looking for approaches to performance management and improvement have many options to choose from and there are a few aspects that set the Baldrige Criteria apart:

- *The Criteria for Performance Excellence provide a framework for improvement without being prescriptive.* Organizations are encouraged to develop creative and flexible approaches aligned with organizational needs and to demonstrate cause-effect linkages between these approaches and their results.
- *The Criteria are inclusive.* While other approaches focus on a single aspect, such as leadership, strategic planning, or process management, the Criteria describe an integrated management framework that addresses all the factors that define the organization, its operations, and its results.
- *The Criteria focus on common requirements, rather than procedures, tools, or techniques.* Other improvement efforts (e.g., ISO, Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing or accreditation) may be integrated into the organization's performance management system and included as part of a response to Criteria requirements.
- *The Criteria are adaptable.* They can be used by large or small businesses, education and health care organizations, and organizations with one site or worldwide locations.
- *The Criteria are at the leading edge of validated management practices.* They are regularly improved to enhance coverage of strategy-driven

performance, address the needs of all stakeholders, and accommodate important organizational needs and practices.

- *The Criteria help organizations align resources, improve communications, and increase productivity and effectiveness.* Baldrige Award recipients, and OPE Award recipients alike, report outstanding results.

### **How can I learn more about the Criteria?**

- To learn the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence and act as an internal “change agent” for your place of work, review and study the Criteria.
- Consider being an Examiner for OPE and use the criteria to work with team members to examine another organization.

### **How does my organization get involved with OPE?**

You can begin using the criteria at any one of three levels. The entrance level will be assessed by OPE, in collaboration with your organization. The decision is primarily based on knowledge of the Baldrige criteria, whether an Organizational Profile has been written, whether an employee survey has been conducted, and other factors. The intent of OPE is to “meet you” wherever you are in your journey, and help you progress as effectively and efficiently as possible. OPE assists organizations to understand the Baldrige Criteria and assist leadership teams to begin their Journey to Performance Excellence and make a long-term commitment to continuous improvement.

The entry levels are 1) Advising; 2) Partnering; and 3) Examining. The Examining level is the traditional Full Application assessment including a site visit by a team of trained examiners.

The successful completion of the Advising level results in the “Spirit” recognition, and the successful completion of the Partnering level results in the “Pioneer” recognition. For Full Applicants, the award recognition levels include Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze. All award recipients are honored at OPE’s annual Quest for Success Conference.

### **How can I become a member of OPE?**

The Ohio Partnership for Excellence (OPE) is a not-for-profit organization. OPE is a membership organization, offering both individual and organizational memberships. Membership benefits include: *The Journey*, a quality newsletter, the opportunity for professional networking, and discounts on all OPE events and activities throughout the year, and other special program offerings.

- **Individual membership** cost \$75 annually, and is renewable in November for the next calendar year.
- **Organizational membership** costs \$10 per full-time employee with a \$500 minimum and \$5,000 maximum. All full-time employees are then entitled to receive all membership benefits.

- **Interested in joining?** Contact the Ohio Partnership for Excellence at [info@partnerhipohio.org](mailto:info@partnerhipohio.org) or call OPE (614) 441-8337.

## **What is the Board of Examiners?**

Each year, over 100 individuals volunteer with OPE and serve as examiners to review full applications. Examiners dedicate hundreds of hours of time, energy and dedication to the mission of promoting performance excellence in Ohio. The Ohio Partnership for Excellence Board of Examiners evaluates applications, visit sites, prepares feedback reports and recommends award levels to the Panel of Judges. Examiners are experienced professionals from all sectors, selected by the OPE Executive Director through a voluntary application process. Collectively, the Board of Examiners contributes over 26,000 hours of volunteered time each year.

## **WHAT IS THE FULL APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS?**

Full applications are reviewed and evaluated by members of the Ohio Partnership for Excellence Board of Examiners. Examiners are assigned to a team made up of a cross-section of examiner expertise and experience. Examiner assignments are made in accordance with strict rules regarding conflict of interest. The name of the applicant, individual application, commentary and scoring information developed during the review of the application are regarded as proprietary and are kept in strictest confidence by the Ohio Partnership for Excellence. Such information is available only to those individuals directly involved in the assessment and evaluation process. Unless otherwise notified, the Ohio Partnership for Excellence destroys all written and electronic copies of applications and feedback reports 90 days after final feedback reports are issued to the applicant organization.

**Stage 1 - Individual Review** involves the independent review of the application package by trained examiners.

**Stage 2 - Consensus Review** involves a consensus review by a team of examiners, facilitated by a team leader.

**Stage 3 - Site Visits** are completed for all full applicants. The examiner team, led by a team leader, conducts an on-site visit to verify and clarify information. The dates of the site visit are scheduled by the team leader in conjunction with the applicant's point of contact. The team develops a feedback report for the OPE Panel of Judges.

**Stage 4 - Judging** is completed by the OPE Panel of Judges (from Ohio and out-of-state) to make award recommendation process. The judges conduct a final

review of the feedback reports to ensure consistent, easy-to-understand, and actionable reports. The Panel of Judges then recommends award levels to the OPE Board of Trustees.

### **What are the benefits to Full Applicants?**

Each applicant gains an outside perspective on its organization based on 300 to 1,000 hours of review by members of the Board of Examiners. The results of this review are synthesized in a feedback report outlining strengths and opportunities for improvement based on the Criteria for Performance Excellence. Feedback reports are used by organizations as part of their strategic planning process to focus on their customers and to improve results as part of their continuous improvement journey. The site visit and feedback report help energize and guide organizational improvement efforts.

### **What recognition or award is given to an organization?**

Organizations entering this long-term quality journey are recognized with an Award at the following levels:

1. Advising Level – Spirit Award
2. Partnering Level – Pioneer Award
3. Examining Level (Full Applicants) receive one of four awards:
  - Platinum – Governor’s Award
  - Gold – Achievement of Excellence
  - Silver – Commitment to Excellence
  - Bronze – Pledge to Excellence

All recipients are honored at the annual Quest for Success Conference. Award recipients may publicize and advertise their awards.

### **Are the identity of applicants and information submitted made available to the public?**

The identity of all applicants remains confidential until the applicant is selected as an award recipient. Information submitted by applicants is always treated as confidential.

### **What is expected of Award recipients?**

Award recipients are required to share information about their exceptional performance practices with other Ohio organizations. However, recipients are not required to share proprietary information, even if such information was a part of their award application. The principal mechanisms for sharing information are

best practice presentations at the annual Quest for Success conference and writing “white papers” to be placed on the OPE Web site. Sharing beyond these mechanisms is on a voluntary basis.

# FULL APPLICATION TIMELINE

## **October 15**

**Intent to Apply Full Application form** and **\$250 non-refundable fee** must be received by OPE.

## **December 15**

**The application package** must be received electronically along with **two paper copies**. **The total application fee**, which must be received by OPE by that same date, covers expenses associated with the review of applications, development of feedback reports, and site-visit.

## **January and February**

**Stage 1 – Independent Review** and **Stage 2 – Consensus Review** consist of review and evaluation by a team of typically six to eight OPE examiners led by a Senior Examiner.

## **March**

**Stage 3 – Site Visit Review** to each applicant of typically six to eight OPE examiners, led by a Senior Examiner is conducted. The number of, and composition of the examiner team members depends on the size of the applicant and the anticipated complexity of the site visit. The OPE examiner team travels to the applicant's site(s) to more fully understand how well the organization is applying the Criteria and concepts. The purpose of the site visit to verify understanding of key strengths and clarify understanding of key opportunities for improvement. A review of pertinent records, data and interviews with senior leaders and employees is conducted. The applicant is permitted to provide updates for all results provided in the application (from December 15 to the start of the site visit). These updates will become part of the official application. Following the site visit, the examiner team submits its report to OPE and the Panel of Judges.

## **April**

**Panel of Judges** review is conducted, and they recommend Award recipients to the OPE Board of Trustees.

## **May**

**Feedback Reports** are sent to each applicant. Feedback reports are prepared by members of the Board of Examiners based on applicants' responses to the Criteria for Performance Excellence. The feedback reports contain applicant-specific key themes, descriptions of strengths, and opportunities for improvement based on the Criteria.

## **September**

Applicants receive the Ohio Award for Excellence (Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze recognition) at the annual Quest for Success conference. The OPE community celebrates and honors all award recipients and learns from their best practices.

## FULL APPLICATION FEES

Each applicant pays a \$250 non-refundable fee when submitting the Intent to Apply form.

The Full Application Fee is due at the time of submission of the application package. The Ohio Partnership for Excellence will *not* evaluate applications if fees are not paid by that time.

<b>Organization Size</b>	<b>Full Application Fee including site visit fees*</b>
<b>Small</b> (less than 99 employees)	<b>\$4,500</b>
<b>Medium</b> (100 to 499 employees)	<b>\$6,500</b>
<b>Large</b> (500 or more employees)	<b>\$8,500</b>
<b>Nonprofit K-12 Education</b> (any size)	<b>\$2,500</b>

*\* Ohio applicants provide lunch to the examiners on the site visit.*

*\* Out-of-state applicants will pay for mileage/travel, lodging, and all meals for the OPE examiner team for the site visit, plus an additional \$250 processing fee is required with the Full Application fee.*

*\* All fees are nonrefundable*

## FULL APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying for the Examining Level or Full Application Award is a two-step process: (1) Intent to Apply form to certify eligibility and (2) award application package.

Step 1 is completing the Intent to Apply form to certify eligibility requirements by completing and submitting an **Intent to Apply Form** and \$250 non-refundable Intent to Apply fee. OPE will certify that an applicant has met the eligibility requirements and send a letter to the point of contact.

Step 2 consists of submitting an **application package** that addresses the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence relevant to the sector in which they operate. Applicants at this level are expected to provide information and data on the organization's key processes and results. The information and data must be adequate to demonstrate the applicant's approaches are effective and yield desired outcomes.

### STEP 1 – INTENT TO APPLY - ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

It is the responsibility of the applicant to meet the following general eligibility requirements:

- Applicant must have employees in Ohio\*\*.
- Applicant must be located in Ohio for at least one year.
- All subordinate elements of the applicant must be included in the application.
- Subunits of a larger organization must be self sufficient enough to be examined in all seven Criteria categories. Ownership location does *not* restrict eligibility.
- Submission of a Baldrige or similar application in the same year does *not* restrict eligibility. Recipients of the Platinum Award for Excellence are ineligible to receive recognition from OPE for the following three years; however, these organizations may submit an application for the purpose of receiving feedback without award recognition.

\*\*Out-of-state organizations without a State Baldrige program are welcome to apply. Please contact OPE for details.

### SECTOR ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Organizations or subunits (a unit or division of a larger organization) of larger entities are eligible to apply for the Ohio Partnership for Excellence program. Subunits (business unit, division) of the same organization may apply individually. Links to the parent organization (the larger organization that owns or has organizational or financial control of a subunit) must be presented. Units of

the same organization at different geographic locations are eligible if they are stand-alone facilities capable of answering each category of the Criteria. Organizations which may potentially qualify under the definition of more than one sector may apply in the sector of their choosing.

If the applicant is found ineligible to apply or if the applicant fails to submit an application package, the application fee is reimbursed minus the \$250 non-refundable Intent to Apply fee.

Any questions concerning the full application process may be discussed at any time with the Executive Director of OPE.

## INTENT TO APPLY INSTRUCTIONS

**Organization Information:** Provide the official name and mailing address of the applicant organization

**Award Sector:** Circle the appropriate box corresponding to the sector of the applicant organization.

**Headquarters Location:** Circle whether or not the applicant organization's headquarters is located in Ohio.

**Total Number of Employees:** Give the number of current worldwide full-time employees of the applicant organization. Indicate the number of full-time employees in the state of Ohio, and give the percentage of assets based in Ohio. (Use full-time equivalents for part-time employees.)

**Highest-Ranking Official:** The applicant's highest-ranking official or designee.

**Primary Contact Person:** List the name, address, telephone number, fax, and email address of the official contact person. This person will be the coordinator of all correspondence with OPE.

**Additional Site Listing:** If your organization has multiple sites, list the address, number of employees at that site, etc.

**Examiner Nominee:** List the name and contact information of at least one individual from your organization who will serve on OPE's Board of Examiners.

## FULL APPLICATION PACKAGE INSTRUCTIONS

A complete application package contains the following Components:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Intent to Apply form
- Organization chart(s)
- Glossary of terms and abbreviations
- Organizational Profile (maximum 5-pages)
- Response to the Criteria (maximum 50-pages)

## Specific Application Package Requirements

- In order to ensure readability, use **10 point font-size or larger** for all text, figures and graphs.
- The number of lines per page must not exceed 60, including headers and page numbers. A blank line separating paragraphs is counted as a line.
- Margins of at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch on the side of the page that is bound or fastened and at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch on the opposite side of the page are preferred.
- Pages should be set up in a two-column format.
- The Organizational Profile is limited to five pages; its content is described in the Criteria.
- Table of Organization Chart(s) should provide sufficient information for examiners to understand the relationships between departments or other organizations mentioned in your Criteria responses.
- The Response to the Criteria contents is described in the *Criteria Response Guidelines* section of the Criteria. Consecutively number this section from page 1 to 50.
- Applicants should make the best use of the 50 page application pages permitted. Please use flowcharts, tables, and “bullet” to present information concisely.
- The Response to the Criteria will address each category and item of the Criteria in the order shown in the sector-specific Criteria. Criteria questions may be in 8 point font-size. Include the title and number of each item’s area to address in the text (i.e., 1.1a Senior Leadership Direction).
- Pictures, graphs, figures and tables should be integrated into the Response to the Criteria text or shown directly after that item response. The Title Page, Table of Contents, Organization chart(s), Intent to Apply form, Site Listing and Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations sections do *not* count against page limits for either the Organizational Profile or the Response to the Criteria sections.
- Do *not* attach appendices, booklets, brochures, or other materials to the application package. Do *not* include video or audio with the application package. Do *not* refer to external references such as Web sites.



## FULL APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying for the Award is a two-step process (1) eligibility certification package and (2) award application package.

Step 1 is **eligibility certification package**, when the organization certifies that it meets eligibility requirements by completing an *Intent to Apply Form* and submitting the application fee. OPE will certify that an applicant has met the eligibility requires and send a letter to the point of contact at the organization.

Step 2 consists of submitting an **application package** that addresses the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence relevant to the sector in which they operate. Applicants at this level are expected to provide information and data on the organization's key processes and results. The information and data must be adequate to demonstrate the applicant's approaches are effective and yield desired outcomes.

### STEP 1 - ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

It is the responsibility of the applicant to meet the following general eligibility requirements:

- Applicant must have employees in Ohio.
- Applicant must be located in Ohio for at least one year.
- All subordinate elements of the applicant must be included in the application.
- Subunits of a larger organization must be self sufficient enough to be examined in all seven Criteria categories. Ownership location does *not* restrict eligibility.
- Submission of a Baldrige or similar application in the same year does *not* restrict eligibility. Recipients of the Platinum Award for Excellence are ineligible to receive recognition from OPE for the following three years; however, these organizations may submit an application for the purpose of receiving feedback without award recognition.
- Out-of-state organizations without a State Baldrige program are welcome to apply.

### SECTOR ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Organizations or subunits (a unit or division of a larger organization) of larger entities are eligible to apply for the Ohio Partnership for Excellence program. Subunits (business unit, division) of the same organization may apply individually. Links to the parent organization (the larger organization that owns or has organizational or financial control of a subunit) must be presented. Units of the same organization at different geographic locations are eligible if they are stand-alone facilities capable of answering each category of the Criteria.

Organizations which may potentially qualify under the definition of more than one sector may apply in the sector of their choosing.

Potential applicants submit an *Intent to Apply* form to the Ohio Partnership for Excellence (OPE). The deadline for full applicants for Intent to Apply form is October 15<sup>th</sup>. The *Intent to Apply* form must be accompanied by at least \$250 of the full application fee, with checks payable to Ohio Partnership for Excellence. The Intent to Apply fee is non-refundable.

If the applicant is found ineligible to apply or if the applicant fails to submit an application package, the application fee is reimbursed minus the \$250 non-refundable Intent to Apply fee.

Any questions concerning the full application process may be discussed at any time with the Executive Director of OPE.

## INTENT TO APPLY INSTRUCTIONS

**Organization Information:** Provide the official name and mailing address of the applicant organization

**Award Sector:** Circle the appropriate box corresponding to the sector of the applicant organization.

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**Highest-Ranking Official:** The applicant's highest-ranking official or designee.

**Primary Contact Person:** List the name, address (if different from Item 1) and telephone number, fax, and email address of the official contact person. This person will be the coordinator of all correspondence with OPE.

**Additional Site Listing:** If your organization has multiple sites, list the address, number of employees at that site, etc.

**Examiner Nominee:** List the name and contact information of at least one individual from your organization who will serve on OPE's Board of Examiners.

## FULL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The application must be submitted in Adobe® Portable Document Format (PDF). Documents can be published in this format by visiting <http://createpdf.adobe.com> free of charge (or) by purchasing the Adobe® Professional software. The application package must be submitted electronically via email no later than the December 15<sup>th</sup> deadline or sent on CD-ROM and postmarked no later than the deadline. All applicants are asked to submit their application packages electronically. However, it is recognized that email is not secure and if the

applicant is concerned about the security of the information, the U.S. mail option is available. Whether submitted electronically or on CD-ROM, all outstanding fee balances must be received by the same deadline as required for the application package. If the application report exceeds the required page limit, the applicant organization will be contacted to determine which pages to exclude. In addition to the electronic application, please send **two paper copies** via U.S. mail to OPE.

### **Overview of the Full Application Package**

A complete application package contains the following Components:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Intent to Apply form
- Organization chart(s)
- Glossary of terms and abbreviations
- Organizational Profile (maximum 5-pages)
- Response to the Criteria (maximum 50-pages)

### **Specific Application Package Requirements**

- In order to ensure readability, use **10 point font-size or larger** for all text, figures and graphs. Use no more than 60 lines per page, including headers and page numbers.
- The Organizational Profile is limited to five pages; its content is described in the Criteria.
- Table of Organization Chart(s) should provide sufficient information for examiners to understand the relationships between departments or other organizations mentioned in your Criteria responses.
- The Response to the Criteria contents is described in the Criteria Response Guidelines section of the Criteria. Consecutively number this section from page 1 to 50.
- The Response to the Criteria will address each category and item of the Criteria in the order shown in the sector-specific Criteria. Criteria questions may be in 8 point font-size. Include the title and number of each item's area to address in the text (i.e., 1.1a Senior Leadership Direction).
- Pictures, graphs, figures and tables should be integrated into the Response to the Criteria text or shown directly after that item response. The Title Page, Table of Contents, Organization chart(s), Intent to Apply form, Site Listing and Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations sections do

*not* count against page limits for either the Organizational Profile or the Response to the Criteria sections.

- Do *not* attach appendices, booklets, brochures, or other materials to the application package. Do *not* include video or audio with the application package. Do *not* refer to external references such as Web sites.
- All components of the application package should be in Adobe® Portable Document Format (PDF), submitted electronically or on CD-ROM.
- All application packages must contain two paper copies on 8½ x 11 inch paper.
- All application packages must be emailed and mailed with postmarks **by the deadline**. Hand deliveries are not accepted.

## APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Full applications are reviewed and evaluated by members of the Ohio Partnership for Excellence Board of Examiners. Examiners are assigned to a team made up of a cross-section of examiner expertise and experience. Examiner assignments are made in accordance with strict rules regarding conflict of interest. The name of the applicant, individual application, commentary and scoring information developed during the review of the application are regarded as proprietary and are kept in strictest confidence by the Ohio Partnership for Excellence. Such information is available only to those individuals directly involved in the assessment and evaluation process. Unless otherwise notified, the Ohio Partnership for Excellence destroys all written and electronic copies of applications and feedback reports 90 days after final feedback reports are issued to the applicant organization.

**Stage 1 - Individual Review** involves the independent review of the application package by trained examiners.

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**Stage 4 - Judging** is completed by the OPE Panel of Judges (from Ohio and out-of-state) to make award recommendation process. The judges conduct a final review of the feedback reports to ensure consistent, easy-to-understand, and

actionable reports. The Panel of Judges then recommends award levels to the OPE Board of Trustees.

### **APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Title Page
- \_\_\_\_\_ Table of Contents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intent to Apply form
- \_\_\_\_\_ Table of Organization chart(s)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organizational Profile (5 pages maximum)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Response to the Criteria (50 pages maximum)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pages in Response to Criteria are consecutively numbered from Page 1
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10 point type maximum size
- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of lines per page meet requirements.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Two paper copies of the entire packet is
- \_\_\_\_\_ One electronic copy via Email or on CD-ROM in Adobe PDF
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remaining fees (checks payable to the Ohio Partnership for Excellence)

### **QUESTIONS**

Questions? Write to us: [info@partnershipohio.org](mailto:info@partnershipohio.org) or call us at 614-441-8337