

## Florida Sterling Quality Program

The Florida Sterling Management System is a comprehensive way for organizations to improve performance. Based on the National Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria, Florida Sterling is considered to be the premier state model for continuous improvement. Sterling Quality is based on best practices, or criteria, in seven categories, as established by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award program.

The seven categories are:

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

Originally focused on the manufacturing industry, these criteria have been used by health, education, and non-profit organizations to assess and enhance performance.

The School District of Lee County adopted the Sterling Model several years ago as a means for increasing organizational efficiency and student achievement. Eight Sterling Demonstration Schools were developed: Gateway Elementary, Orange River Elementary, Tanglewood Elementary, Tropic Isles Elementary, North Fort Myers Academy for the Arts, Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School, Lehigh Acres Middle School, and Cypress Lake High School. These schools have had teams of teachers trained in the Sterling Criteria and using Quality Tools in the classroom.

The Governor's Sterling Award program is managed by the Florida Sterling Council, which offers organizations graduated assessments to use for improvement. These include the Sterling Navigator, the Sterling Challenge, and the Governor's Sterling Award. Using the specific feedback from these assessments, organizations throughout the state of Florida have been able to pinpoint areas for improvement.

One of our demonstration schools, Tropic Isles Elementary, has gone through the Sterling Challenge process. This process involves an application explaining how the school incorporates each area of the criteria. This is followed by a site visit from a team of Sterling Examiners, who verify and clarify information from the application. The team then provides a feedback report to the school, listing strengths they have found, and opportunities for improvement that they have noticed. This report provides the school with valuable, objective knowledge on where to begin working on improving processes. The next step for Tropic Isles will be to apply for the Governor's Sterling Award, which involves a more detailed and vigorous application and site visit process.

The Sterling assessment process is also taking place at the District level. Many of our departments have participated in a Navigator assessment. Next year, the District will begin a peer team assessment process, and plans are in place to apply for the Governor's Sterling Award the following year.

For more information on the Sterling Management System, please go to The Florida Sterling Council website, <http://www.floridasterling.com/>

The following pages contain information about the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, which is the basis for the Florida Sterling Management System.

### **Frequently Asked Questions about the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award**

The following information was retrieved from the National Institute of Standards and Technology website, [http://www.nist.gov/public\\_affairs/factsheet/baldfags.htm](http://www.nist.gov/public_affairs/factsheet/baldfags.htm)

#### **Who was Malcolm Baldrige?**

Malcolm Baldrige was Secretary of Commerce from 1981 until his death in a rodeo accident in July 1987. Baldrige was a proponent of quality management as a key to this country's prosperity and long-term strength. He took a personal interest in the quality improvement act that was eventually named after him and helped draft one of the early versions. In recognition of his contributions, Congress named the award in his honor.

#### **What is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award?**

The Baldrige Award is given by the President of the United States to businesses—manufacturing and service, small and large—and to education, health care and nonprofit organizations that apply and are judged to be outstanding in seven areas: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management; and results.

Congress established the award program in 1987 to recognize U.S. organizations for their achievements in quality and performance and to raise awareness about the importance of quality and performance excellence as a competitive edge. The award is not given for specific products or services. Three awards may be given annually in each of these categories: manufacturing, service, small business, education, health care and nonprofit.

While the Baldrige Award and the Baldrige recipients are the very visible centerpiece of the U.S. quality movement, a broader national quality program has evolved around the award and its criteria. A report, *Building on Baldrige: American Quality for the 21st Century*, by the private Council on Competitiveness, said, "More than any other program, the Baldrige Quality Award is responsible for making quality a national priority and disseminating best practices across the United States."

The U.S. Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) manages the Baldrige National Quality Program in close cooperation with the private sector.

#### **Why was the award established?**

In the early and mid-1980s, many industry and government leaders saw that a renewed emphasis on quality was no longer an option for American companies but a necessity for doing business in an ever expanding, and more demanding, competitive world market. But many American businesses either did not believe quality mattered for them or did not know where to begin. The Baldrige Award was envisioned as a standard of excellence that would help U.S. organizations achieve world-class quality.

### **How is the Baldrige Award achieving its goals?**

The criteria for the Baldrige Award have played a major role in achieving the goals established by Congress. They now are accepted widely, not only in the United States but also around the world, as the standard for performance excellence. The criteria are designed to help organizations enhance their competitiveness by focusing on two goals: delivering ever improving value to customers and improving overall organizational performance.

The award program has proven to be a remarkably successful government and private-sector team effort. The annual government investment of about \$7 million is leveraged by a contribution of over \$100 million from private-sector and state and local organizations, including \$10 million raised by private industry to help launch the program and the time and efforts of hundreds of largely private-sector volunteers.

The cooperative nature of this joint government/private-sector team is perhaps best captured by the award's Board of Examiners. Each year, more than 300 experts from industry, educational institutions, governments at all levels, and non-profit organizations volunteer many hours reviewing applications for the award, conducting site visits, and providing each applicant with an extensive feedback report citing strengths and opportunities to improve. In addition, board members have given thousands of presentations on quality management, performance improvement, and the Baldrige Award.

The Baldrige Award winners also have taken seriously their charge to be quality advocates. Their efforts to educate and inform other companies and organizations on the benefits of using the Baldrige Award framework and criteria have far exceeded expectations. To date, the recipients have given tens of thousands of presentations reaching thousands of organizations.

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