

Baldrige Foundation 2013 Improvement Survey: A Summary

In fall 2013, the Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award sponsored a survey of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program's customers and stakeholders. The purpose of the survey was to identify areas for improvement in products and services, such as the Baldrige Award process (from examiners' point of view), Baldrige Examiner Training, the Baldrige Criteria, and self-assessment tools. The survey also asked for on products and services that respondents would like the program to offer.

The survey did not include questions on the Baldrige Award process from applicants' point of view or on the Quest for Excellence Conference, since the program surveys applicants and Quest participants every year.

The survey was sent to the broad Baldrige community (about 10,000 individuals), including

- members of the Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award from 2010 to 2013, as well as individuals who applied to be examiners or asked for information on becoming an examiner;
- Baldrige Award applicants since 2006;
- Baldrige Award recipients;
- Alliance for Performance Excellence program directors;
- Baldrige sponsors;
- subscribers to e-mail updates on Baldrige Award news, Baldrige events, the Baldrige blog (Blogrige), and the Web column Insights on the Road to Performance Excellence; and
- purchasers of the Criteria for Performance Excellence through the Baldrige Web site from December 2012 through September 2013.

Respondents

In total, 1,050 individuals responded to the survey, a rate of about 10%. The respondents identified themselves as follows:

- Examiners (51.1%)
- Consultants (8.4%)
- Award recipients (8.2%)
- Award applicants (6.5%)
- Criteria purchasers (5.1%)
- Regional, state, or local program directors (3.8%)
- Other customers/stakeholders (16.9%)
- No identification (5.0%)

If the Baldrige Program could offer you one product or service that it does not currently offer, what would that product or service be?

Most Frequent Suggestion: Training

The suggestions for future products and services (713) varied widely. Taken together, all types of training accounted for 25.1% of the total.

The most frequently types of training mentioned were advanced Baldrige training and training in understanding and using the Baldrige Criteria (5.7% and 4.8% of the total suggestions, respectively). All other types of training mentioned (an introduction for executives, Baldrige beginner training, training in application writing, regional training, and communities of practice) each made up 2.9% or fewer of the total suggestions.

Benchmarking/Best Practices and Consulting/Coaching/Mentoring

Only one other suggestion—benchmarking/best practices databases (10.7%)—accounted for more than 10% of the total. Consulting/coaching/mentoring was mentioned in 9.2% of the suggestions.

Other Suggestions

The next most frequent suggestions included Web-based offerings of all types (7.3%), Criteria-based products (6.7%), non-award-based organizational assessments (6.3%), and advanced Baldrige training (5.7%).

Two other suggestions that are not technically products or services were for the Baldrige Program to once again distribute the Criteria free of charge (5.7%) and to increase marketing and visibility of the Criteria, the award, and the program (5.1%).

Varying Responses by Group

Segmented by respondent group, the suggestions varied but showed some patterns:

- Among the groups, examiners were the most diverse in their suggestions, mentioning only one—consulting/coaching/mentoring—in more than 10% of their comments. No other group mentioned this service in more than 10% of their comments.
- Training (all types taken together; 18.8% to 27.5%) was the most frequently suggested product or service by far for each group except program directors.
- Benchmarking and best practices ranked in the top two products and services suggested by award recipients (22.7%), award applicants (18.6%), consultants (17.2%), and examiners (8.4%).
- Only program directors (18.8%) and consultants (10.3%) ranked a return to free Criteria in their top three suggestions.
- Program directors' most common suggestion was increased marketing and visibility for the program (25.0%). Besides this suggestion and free Criteria (18.8%), the directors did not mention any other product or service in more than 9% of their comments.
- Only consultants suggested advanced Baldrige examiner training (17.2%) in more than 10% of the comments.
- Web-based products and services ranked in the top two suggestions only by Criteria purchasers (10.4%) and others (9.4%).
- Criteria purchasers' most frequent suggestion was Criteria-based products and services (12.5%).

Indicate your use of any of the following self-assessment tools (Are We Making Progress?, Are We Making Progress As Leaders?, *easyInsight*, other: e.g., Baldrige Express). Please comment on the usefulness of the tools.

Use of the self-assessment tools was as follows, with most of the 626 respondents indicating that they had used more than one tool.

Are We Making Progress?* and *Are We Making Progress as Leaders?

Are We Making Progress? and *Are We Making Progress As Leaders?* were the most widely used tools (by 77.5% and 66.1% of the respondents, respectively). Of the 191 respondents who commented on the tools, most (113) identified them as useful, mainly for introducing and raising awareness of the Baldrige Criteria. Conversely, 29 said that the tools were not useful or were too simple, with the majority mentioning their limitations as entry-level tools.

easyInsight

Of the 70 respondents who said that they had used *easyInsight*, 20 included comments, and all noted that it was useful.

Other Self-Assessment Tools (e.g., Baldrige Express)

Of the 43 comments on Baldrige Express, 28 cited its usefulness. Eight commenters found the tool less than useful, with some citing the need for further explanation of the results and some noting the complexity of the questions.

Have you used the services of a Baldrige-based regional/state/local program? If yes, in what capacity?

Of 991 respondents, 560 (56.5%) said that they had used the services of a Baldrige-based program. Use of these programs was highest by award applicants (80.9%) and recipients (72.1%). Fewer than 50% of the members of three groups—consultants (47.6%), other customers/stakeholders (37.6%), and unidentified respondents (36.5%)—said that they had used these services.

Of the respondents, 72 commented on their experience with a Baldrige-based program: 41 noted positive experiences, and 31 suggested opportunities for improvement.

Because of the small number of comments and the fact that they referred to various programs, conclusions about the content are difficult. In general, though, commenters noted the value of the Baldrige-based programs' products and services in improving their organizations. Opportunities for improvement included variability among state programs, a perceived lack of usefulness of the feedback received, and a perceived lack of resources available to the program.

Have you ever used the Criteria for Performance Excellence? If not, please comment on why.

Of the 1,012 respondents to this question, 89.7% had used the Criteria. The lowest use was by self-identified other customers/stakeholders (71.0%) and respondents who did not identify themselves with a group (63.2%).

Why Not?

Of the 104 respondents who said that they had not used the Criteria, 58 offered a reason. The two most common were a lack of familiarity with the Criteria (32.8%; 11 other customers/stakeholders and 8 unidentified respondents) and the fact that the respondent's organization was not ready or willing to use the Criteria (29.3%; 5 examiners, 2 Criteria purchasers, 7 other customers/stakeholders, and 1 unidentified respondent).

All other reasons given—the perception that the Criteria are not applicable, the amount of effort required to implement them, the cost, a perceived focus on the Baldrige Award, and a lack of international access—were cited by less than 10% of the respondents.

How Are the Criteria Used?

Although the survey asked for comments on why respondents had *not* used the Criteria, most of respondents commented on *how* they had used the Criteria. Notably, 63.8% of the 478 uses mentioned did not involve an award. Top uses named were as an internal aid or the basis of an internal assessment (35.6%), for consulting or coaching (14.2%), and as an examiner (13.8%). Other uses, each accounting for less than 10% of the total, were for an award application, for teaching, and for accreditation.

If your organization uses the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, how likely is it that you would recommend the Criteria to a professional colleague or key customer, partner, or supplier?

Of the 950 respondents, 91.5% (828) said that they were very likely or likely to recommend the Criteria. Only 2.4% (23) were unlikely or very unlikely to recommend them. This large proportion of recommenders held true in all groups. The only groups with a percentage of very likely/likely to recommend lower than 91% were other customers and stakeholders (82.2%) and unidentified respondents (67.6%).

Of those unlikely or very unlikely to recommend the Criteria (2.4%), the highest percentages were among consultants (3.8%) and program directors (2.7%), and the lowest were among award applicants (1.5%) and examiners (2.0%).

What are the major factors keeping you from being more likely to recommend the Criteria?

The context for the answers to this question is the small number of respondents who said they were unlikely or very likely to recommend the Criteria (23). This means that the suggestions come mainly from respondents who are likely to recommend the Criteria and therefore represent opportunities for improvement.

Top Answers: Complexity and Effort Required

Among the 329 factors mentioned in answer to this question, the most-cited factors (taken together) were perceived complexity (of the Criteria or the language in the Criteria; 26.1%). Some responders who gave this

reason explained that they might not recommend the Criteria to a particular organization because the organization might not be ready to deal with that complexity.

Considering complexity of the Criteria and complexity of the Criteria language as separate factors, the most commonly mentioned factors were the complexity of the Criteria (18.2%) and the effort required to implement them (17.9%).

Other Answers

Other factors making up more than 10% of the total were a perceived lack of visibility (i.e., the perception that the Criteria are not widely known; 11.9%), issues internal to the commenter's organization (11.9%), and cost (of the Criteria and of applying for a Baldrige-based award; 11.6%).

Some Variation by Group

Segmented by respondent group, the factors showed some variation, but complexity (of the Criteria and/or the language of the Criteria) ranked in the top three factors mentioned by each group. Effort to implement the Criteria was in the top three factors for examiners, award recipients, consultants, and Criteria purchasers. Cost was in the top three most-mentioned factors only for consultants and program directors.

Because of a loss of federal funding, the Baldrige Program must now charge a fee for the Criteria for Performance Excellence. Has this fee been a barrier to your organization's use of the Criteria?

Of the 944 respondents, 37.6% said that the Criteria fee was a barrier. A majority of only two groups— program directors (65.7%) and consultants (51.9%)—said that the fee was a barrier. Members of these groups commented that the fee constrained their ability to use free Criteria booklets for outreach and business development.

“Yes”: Tight Budgets and Limits on Outreach

For the other groups, the percentage of “yes” answers ranged from 24.0% to 41.4%. Some respondents said that the program had begun charging for the Criteria at a time when organizational budgets were under pressure. Others said that the fee made it difficult to share the Criteria widely within their organizations.

“No”: Reasonable Fee

Among the “no” responders, some commented that the fee was unfortunate but understandable and that the cost of the Criteria was reasonable. Others suggested distributing the electronic version free of charge and charging only for the printed booklet.

Some organizations have told us that the Baldrige Criteria are too complex. If you believe this is so, how would you simplify the Baldrige Criteria?

Top Answer: Don't “Water Down” the Criteria

Of the 634 suggestions offered in response to this question, 25.9% noted that the Criteria were not too complex and advised against simplifying them. These commenters mainly said that organizational excellence itself is complex and expressed an unwillingness to “water down” the Criteria for fear that they would lose their value.

Top Suggestion: Offer Tiered Versions

In the remaining comments, the most frequent suggestion by far (18.6%) was to not to simplify the Criteria themselves but to increase their accessibility by offering tiered versions scaled to different levels of users. Of the comments that mentioned simplifying the Criteria, suggestions making up more than 5% of the total were to simplify the language (10.7%), include more explanatory material (9.5%), reduce redundancy (5.4%), and reduce the number of questions in the multiple requirements (5.2%).

Segmented by subgroup, the topics mentioned largely reflected the responses of the whole group. For all groups, the response that the Criteria are not too complex ranked in the top three given. For all groups but award applicants, “offer tiered versions” ranked in the top three.

If you participated in Examiner Training in 2012 and/or 2013, how satisfied were you with your experience?

Of the 373 respondents, 84.1% said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the training; 3.1% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

What are the major factors keeping you from giving your experience in Examiner Training a higher rating?

Among the 240 factors mentioned, none accounted for more than 10% of the total. The most frequently mentioned factors related to classmates (9.6%) and facilitators (9.2%) rather to the curriculum content. Many of these comments noted that certain classmates tended to dominate table discussions. Other factors mentioned were the length of training (7.9%; with some respondents saying that the training was too short while others said it was too long), repetition (7.9%), and the cost of travel and lodging costs associated with training (7.5%).

As an examiner, if you participated in a national Baldrige Award evaluation in 2012 and/or 2013, how satisfied were you with your experience?

Of the 353 respondents, 76.2% (269) were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience as examiners in the Baldrige Award process, and 5.9% (21) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

What are the major factors keeping you from giving a higher rating to your experience as an examiner in a national Baldrige evaluation?

Large Teams and Use of New Examiners

Among the 166 factors mentioned, the one mentioned most often (33.1%) was particular only to the 2013 Baldrige Award process: large evaluation teams and the fact that new examiners typically did not participate fully in Consensus Review.

Site Visit and Team Dynamics

The second most common group of issues (18.1%) involved Site Visit Review. Examiners noted, for example, the physical and mental toll of site visits as well as the potential for improvements in the way examiners document their work.

The third set of issues (12.7%) centered on the dynamics within the team (e.g., teammates not completing work, variation in teammates' skills, and the tendency of some teammates to dominate the evaluation). No other issue made up more than 10% of the total.

Is there any other feedback you would like to share?

Many of the 428 responses to this question repeated information included in previous answers. By topic, the most common type of comment (24.8%) consisted of thanks, congratulations, or encouragement for the Baldrige Program. Other topics were the need for better visibility for the program (14.7%), reinforcement of comments on Examiner Training or the award process (13.3%), and suggestions for products and services (9.3%).

An additional set of comments suggested directions for the program (7.7%). These ranged from encouragement to regain federal funding, to the opinion that the program should separate completely from the federal government, to the idea that the program was not acting quickly enough to change its direction.

Another set of comments focused on state programs (6.5%). The most common issues noted were the need for closer alignment between the Baldrige Program and state programs and the lack of alignment among the state programs.