# Minutes

# Judges Panel of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award

**Baldrige Performance Excellence Program ● National Institute of Standards and Technology**

**Wednesday, June 10, 2020, via videoconference**

## Attendees

*Judges:* Allison Carter, Glenn Crotty, Kevin Johnson, Amy Katschman, Christopher Laxton, Kevin McManus, Brigitta Mueller, Bruce Requa, Patricia Skriba, JoAnn Sternke, Meridith Wentz, Gary Wilson

*NIST:* Jamie Ambrosi, Dawn Bailey, Rebecca Bayless, Jacqueline DesChamps, Robert Fangmeyer, Barbara Fischer, Ellen Garshick, Robert Hunt, Elif Karakas, Darren Lowe, Robyn Verner, Kelly Welsh

## The meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m.

## Welcome and Meeting Overview

Baldrige Program Director Robert Fangmeyer welcomed the judges and thanked them for serving in their key role for the program. After introductions, Chair of the Judges Panel Allison Carter thanked the judges and the Baldrige staff for their work on the 2020 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award process, stressing the judges’ unique viewpoint. She noted that the judges’ goal for the day was to build the team and set the stage for their 2020 work.

The minutes of the November 2019 Judges Panel meeting were approved as written.

## Judges Panel Roles and Process

Carter reviewed the Judges Panel’s key roles and responsibilities: (1) select applicants to advance to Site Visit Review, (2) recommend award recipients, (3) work with examiner team leaders on the site visit process and feedback report, (4) recommend process changes to the Board of Overseers, (5) provide input into the development of the Baldrige Criteria, and (6) serve as ambassadors. She said that the process should be fair, thorough, and cognizant of the amount of time applicants have put into the process. She noted that the first-year judges had been assigned third-year judges as mentors to ease their integration into the panel.

Robert Hunt reviewed the judges’ responsibilities, key dates, and deadlines for 2020 cycle. In June, the judges review and agree on expectations and work processes, and report to the Board of Overseers on judging process improvements. On August 19, the judges will identify applicants to advance to Site Visit Review and review their conflicts of interest. Fangmeyer emphasized that judges do not receive applications or reports for applicants with which they have a conflict, and conflicted judges will not be part of the discussion of those applicants at the November 9–13 meeting.

Hunt said that in November, judges will review applicants that have received a site visit and recommend which should receive the Baldrige Award. He reviewed the process, forms, and tools designed to help the judges with their work and ensure a fair, rigorous process. Hunt, Carter, Fangmeyer, and panel members also responded to judges’ questions. Carter emphasized that judges should focus on the information they need to inform their decision to recommend an applicant for the award.

## Improvements and Changes to the Judging Process

Hunt and Fangmeyer asked the judges about potential improvements and changes to the judging process. The panel agreed that the process was effective overall and identified minor changes to increase efficiency and comply with continuing restrictions on visitors to NIST: (1) hold the August 19 meeting via videoconference; (2) submit conflict-of-interest information electronically in July; (3) continue the practice (piloted in 2019) of not receiving Consensus Review scorebooks, as the consensus information is in the Site Visit Scorebook; (4) make minor changes to the scoring profile included in the judges’ presentation; (5) at the November meeting, eliminate the first round of voting on each applicant and proceed directly to the vote on recommending the applicant for the award; and (6) as a pilot, receive applications electronically only and scorebooks electronically and on paper. A decision on the medium for the November 9–13 meeting will be made later.

## 2020 Baldrige Award Process

Hunt reported on the number and distribution of applicants in 2020: 20, including 11 health care organizations, 6 nonprofit organizations, 2 small businesses, and 1 education organization. He reviewed examiner team size and makeup, other roles fulfilled by examiners, the makeup of the Board of Examiners, and criteria for selection as an examiner

Fangmeyer gave an overview of the program’s approach to the award process in 2020 in light of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: the program surveyed customers and stakeholders; identified requirements, constraints, and challenges; and modified processes accordingly. This resulted in four initial changes: (1) Examiner Training shifted to virtual sessions plus coaching, and New Examiner Orientation was canceled; (2) the Board of Examiners includes a higher percentage of experienced examiners and fewer new examiners; (3) the application deadline was delayed nine days; and (4) applicants submitted PDF applications only. Consequently, during Independent and Consensus Review, examiners had access only to these PDF applications.

Fangmeyer noted that the program still needs to decide how to conduct site visits in 2020, as some applicants may be unable or unwilling to host full, on-site site visits in the fall, and examiners may be unable or unwilling to travel. The program’s research and benchmarking indicates that effective virtual site visits are possible, including visits that would allow exploration of deployment and integration, and that the program has the information it needs to design such a process. He emphasized the need to conduct the same site visit process for all applicants to ensure consistency and equity.

The judges asked whether learning from the redesigned award process applied to the design of a virtual site visit. Fangmeyer said that the pilot had an actual on-site component, but some learning on how to conduct virtual interviews did apply. Other judges offered lessons learned from their own experience with traditional and virtual site visits and noted the opportunity to leverage the flexibility offered by a virtual process to improve on the timing of the current process. They also noted the importance of training examiners in the virtual process, keeping examiners engaged if they are not physically on-site and with their teammates, and balancing this with the need to keep expectations of examiners realistic if they are working from home. They emphasized the need to retain the rigor of the site visit, the ability to capture organizational culture, and the character of a site visit as different from an accreditation visit.

Fangmeyer then asked the judges what role-model performance would look like in 2020, given that applicants’ results are likely to decline in many areas as a result of the pandemic. He noted that the examiners and judges will need guidance on dealing with significant drops in performance measures across many areas of importance. In addition, examiners and judges will also need to consider how well award applicants have responded to the crisis in the areas of leadership, workforce (e.g., engagement, capability, and capacity), operations (e.g., supply network), customers (e.g., changes in customer base and requirements), and community support. Financial results may be especially poor for mid- to late 2020; data may be missing for 2020 as reporting may have fallen off, and there may be geographic differences as the pandemic affects different areas of the country. The judges noted that examiners might be coached to expect such declines, as well as missing data, and that the industry expert on the examiner team may be crucial in helping the team reach a full understanding of the applicant’s performance. They also noted that the pandemic will have been a test for leadership. Examiners may need to look at results in a more nuanced way, as good performance followed by a drop may not indicate a traditional opportunity for improvement. They also pointed out that the pandemic’s effect will have tested the applicants’ approaches and revealed the applicants’ ability to respond to a crisis.

## Baldrige Program Updates

Fangmeyer reported on engagement scores for the 2019 award applicants based on the Survey of Award Applicants. Net Promoter Scores for respondents’ likelihood to recommend the Baldrige Criteria, their relevance, likelihood to reapply, and satisfaction with participation all show improvement since 2010, when the program began using this measure. Fangmeyer noted that satisfaction with the feedback reports received by applicants, as well as the response rate, has increased and that aspects of the modified award process to be implemented in 2021 address some opportunities for improvement.

## Preparation for the Board of Overseers Meeting

The judges reached agreement on minor judging process enhancements for Carter to report to the Board of Overseers at their meeting the following day. They also agreed to share their perspective on virtual site visits.

After a discussion of meeting strengths and opportunities for improvement, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

S. Allison Carter

Chair

Judges Panel

X/X/2020