# Item Evaluation Process for Independent Review

**After doing your initial read of the award application and drafting your initial list of key factors on your Key Factors Worksheet, complete the following steps:**

1. **Read the Criteria item to refresh your memory and understand the item questions.**
2. **Determine and select the most relevant KFs for the item.**
   * In BOSS, select the most relevant four to six KFs for the item. These will be a subset of those on the KF Worksheet and may even be a subset of one KF (e.g., one strategic challenge that is most relevant to the item rather than the entire set of strategic challenges).

**BOSS Tip:** To select noncontiguous parts of a KF, select them as two separate KFs. You may select more than six KFs if it is necessary in order to obtain more KF specificity.

1. **Analyze the application Item.** 
   * **Identify the processes or approach the applicant uses in response to item questions.**
   * **Flag, mark up, and/or take notes as needed.**
     + - Note all potential strengths and OFIs as compared with the Criteria and KFs for the item.
       - On the application, in the items, or on the *Initial Thoughts* page, note any measure/indicator you expect to see reported in category 7— results.
       - Note any ideas, threads, or patterns that recur in multiple items or categories. These may be useful in determining key themes.
       - In noting the processes or approach, use the applicant’s wording from the application rather than using your own words or “Baldrigese”.
2. **Identify around six combined strengths and OFIs.**
   * Prioritize the potential strengths and OFIs from Step 3 and choose **around six strengths and OFIs that are of most value to the applicant**, recording brief statements with their accompanying evidence. For each strength or OFI
     + Enter the strength (or OFI) as a brief statement of an approach. It should represent the responsiveness of the applicant to the Criteria, given its KFs (the “nugget”).
     + Provide the evidence that supports the statement as a strength (e.g., the approach XYZ has six steps, was expanded in 2017, and includes a final step for evaluation and feedback).
     + Provide the relevance of all OFIs and those strengths that support key themes, based on KFs
     + Choose strengths/OFIs that provide value-added insight that gives the applicant information it doesn’t already know.
     + Choose strengths that are processes or approaches that support the applicant’s achievement of its desired results. Link to KFs and the Criteria.
     + Choose OFIs that are processes or approaches (or lack of) that create vulnerabilities in achieving the applicant’s desired results. Link to KFs and the Criteria.
     + Consider the maturity of applicant—look for strengths or OFIs that will take it to the next level.
     + Choose strengths and OFIs that do not conflict.
       - Determine the strength’s (or OFI’s) significance to your evaluation of the applicant and whether it should be doubled.
       - Use the arrows to arrange the order of the strengths and OFIs, starting with the most important feedback to give the applicant.
3. **Draft a feedback-ready strength and a feedback-ready OFI.**
   * Select the strength and the OFI that you have prioritized as the most important to give the applicant. Use the Comment Guidelines to craft two actionable, feedback-ready comments that capture the findings of your analysis.
   * Each strength or OFI should include elements from Step 4:
     + - a concise opening statement of the main idea (the “nugget”); one main idea per comment
       - language that shows relevance by tying the main point to one of the applicant’s KFs. You can also ask, “What evaluation factor (approach, deployment, learning, integration) is relevant to that strength or OFI?” Thinking this way may help you focus the comment on the importance to the applicant (e.g., if the important element of the comment is deployment, there may be no need to add text on approach, learning, and integration).
       - one or two examples to support the main idea
4. **Determine the scoring range and the score for the item.**

* Determine the applicant’s overall scoring range for the item. Start by reviewing the Criteria questions and the strengths and OFIs for the item.
* Note the balance and importance of the strengths and OFIs, including those that are doubled and those that relate to item questions and the KFs.
* On the *Scoring* page for the item, review the Scoring Guidelines descriptions and determine the range that is, overall, most descriptive of the organization’s achievement level.

***The applicant does not need to demonstrate all the characteristics in the selected range; rather, the score is based on a holistic view of the Scoring Guidelines.***

* As a check, read the description of the ranges above and below the selected range to determine where the applicant’s score falls within that range.
* Finally, determine a percentage score that is a multiple of 5 for the item. Record the percentage score in the space provided at the lower right side of the *Scoring* page.

***Repeat this process for the rest of the Criteria Items.***

**Appendix: Evaluation Factors**

*Process Item Evaluation Factors*

**Approach (A)**

**Definition**: “Approach” refers to the methods used by an organization to carry out its processes. Approach includes the appropriateness of the methods to the item questions and to the organization’s operating environment, as well as how effectively the organization uses those methods.

* + Is the approach systematic (i.e., well-ordered, repeatable, and exhibiting the use of reliable data and information so that learning is possible)?
  + Is there evidence that the approach is effective in accomplishing the process?
  + Is this approach (or collection of approaches) a key organizational process? Is the approach important to the applicant’s operating environment?

**Deployment (D)**

**Definition**:“Deployment” refers to the extent to which an organization applies an approach in addressing the questions of a Baldrige Criteria item. Evaluation of deployment considers how broadly and deeply the approach is applied to relevant work units throughout the organization.

* + Is deployment addressed?
  + What evidence is presented that the approach is in use in one, some, or all appropriate work units, facilities, locations, shifts, organizational levels, and so forth?
  + Does the approach address item questions that are relevant and important to the organization?
  + Is the approach applied consistently?

**Learning (L)**

**Definition:** “Learning,” in the context of the evaluation factors, refers to new knowledge or skills acquired through evaluation, study, experience, and innovation.

* + Has the approach been refined through cycles of evaluation and improvement? If it has, was the evaluation and improvement conducted in a fact-based, systematic manner (e.g., was it regular, recurring, data driven)?
  + Is there evidence of organizational learning (i.e., evidence that the learning is achieved through research and development, evaluation and improvement cycles, ideas and input from workforce and stakeholders, the sharing of best practices, and benchmarking)?
  + Is there evidence of sharing of refinements and innovation with other relevant work units and processes within the organization (e.g., evidence that the learning is actually used to drive innovation and refinement)?

**Integration (I)**

**Definition:** As a process evaluation factor, “integration” covers the range from organizational “alignment” of approaches in the lower-scoring ranges to “integration” of approaches in the higher ranges.

“Alignment” refers to a state of consistency among plans, processes, information, resource decisions, workforce capability and capacity, actions, results, and analyses that support key organization-wide goals. It requires a common understanding of purposes and goals. It also requires the use of complementary measures and information for planning, tracking, analysis, and improvement at three levels: the organization level, the key process level, and the work unit level.

“Integration”refers to the harmonization of plans, processes, information, resource decisions, workforce capability and capacity, actions, results, and analyses to support key organization-wide goals. Effective integration goes beyond alignment and is achieved when the individual components of a performance management system operate as a fully interconnected unit.

* + How well is the approach aligned with the organizational needs the applicant has identified in the Organizational Profile and other process items?
  + Are the applicant’s measures, information, and improvement systems complementary across processes and work units?
  + How well is the approach integrated with organizational needs to support organization-wide goals (i.e., plans, processes, results, analyses, learning, and actions are harmonized across processes and work units)?

*Examples of organizational needs are generally listed as KFs—strategic challenges, objectives, and related action plans; organizational mission, vision, and goals; strategic advantages; key processes and measures; key customer/market segments and requirements; and workforce groups and requirements*.