

# **Meeting of the Judges Panel of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award**

## **Wednesday, August 13, 2025, 10:00 – 3:00 PM ET, Virtual**

### **Closed Meeting Minutes**

#### **Attendees**

Judges: Keith Everett, Cary Hill, Lynda Johnson, Brian Miller, Jennifer Niswonger, Rebecca Ruhl, Peter Scheuer, Allyson Young

NIST: Rebecca Bayless, Robyn Decker, Robert Fangmeyer, Elif Karakas, Darren Lowe, Kelly Welsh

Meeting start: 10:10 am

#### **Opening Remarks and Introductions**

Fangmeyer welcomed the judges and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Fangmeyer reminded the judges of the purpose of this meeting and highlighted that when selecting award finalists, the focus should not be primarily on providing learning to the applicants, but rather on whether they are potential role models and worthy of being finalists. Fangmeyer reviewed the process for selecting applicants for site visit.

Fangmeyer reviewed the instructions that were given to applicants and both evaluation rubrics.

BPEP Observations from Consensus:

- More than half of the applicants were new to the redesigned award process.
- Applicants did not always provide what we asked for and did not always follow the direction to explain why.
- Some examiners exhibited an audit mentality, with a very narrow interpretation of the questions asked and evaluation rubrics.
- One example of this was seen in how the examiners interpreted “evidence of improvement” in the Process rubric, not giving credit unless an example of a specific change to the process was provided, despite the fact the criteria and guidance did not ask for “examples”.

A judge asked if the issues examiners had during their evaluations would impact how the judges make their decisions. Fangmeyer reassured the Judges that guidance was provided to examiners in real-time throughout the process to correct misunderstandings; however, there is always variation in the evaluations. Some variation is expected, given differing backgrounds and areas of expertise, and it is why examiner teams are required to achieve consensus in their evaluation of the applicant. Variation among examiners and teams does not mean that the work is unreliable.

#### **Review of Judges’ Applicant Workbook**

Lowe gave a brief overview of the Judges Book (Excel file) they will be reviewing to make their determinations. He reviewed what blinded data were being provided, how the data were segmented, and how to navigate through the various Excel spreadsheets.

Fangmeyer explained the color coding of the rubrics and why the process questions are not color-coded in the Excel file. He reviewed what the judges should be looking for when reviewing the data, such as:

- Commonalities across questions, sections, and sectors

- Weak or strong performance across questions, sections, and sectors.
- Applicant-specific demographic information, especially if an applicant is on the bubble.

Fangmeyer reminded the judges that there was no numeric scoring to the evaluation. Examiners were instructed to give level ratings on individual evaluation factors and then give an overall level rating for the question.

### **Individual Review of Scoring Profiles**

Judges took about 45 minutes to individually review ratings.

### **Selection of Applicants for Site Visits**

The Panel reviewed the overall scoring profile for all applicants to set the context but made decisions based on the detailed rating information for each individual applicant, starting with the nonprofit sector. For each applicant, each judge shared their perspective on whether they should advance as a finalist, followed by dialogue, and voting.

Seven organizations were selected as finalists, two (2) from the nonprofit sector; four (4) from health care; and one (1) from Education

### **Review of Judges' Conflicts of Interest with Site-Visited Applicants**

Bayless announced the name and location, as well as the key leaders, suppliers, and competitors of each of the seven finalists. She also shared any known conflicts based on information available to the program. Judges then revealed any potential real or perceived conflicts with each organization based on their prior knowledge and/or direct or indirect relationships with the organizations. Judges with conflicts will receive no further information about the applicant and will not see or participate in any of the judges sharing, discussions, or voting on that applicant.

### **Next Steps**

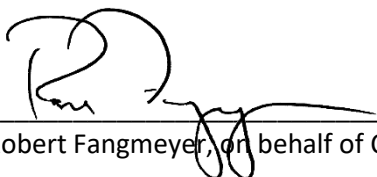
In preparation for the final Judge's meeting in November, Fangmeyer reviewed the judges' roles and Welsh reviewed the Judges' work process, outputs, and timeline.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Health Care and Education Orientations - TBD  
November 3-7, 2025 (virtual)

Meeting end: 2:42 pm

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

  
Robert Fangmeyer, on behalf of Chair

9/3/2025  
Date