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For Immediate Release

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Congress Authorizes “Community” as Newest Baldrige National Quality Award Category

Communities improving economic vitality, health and wellness, educational attainment, and quality of life

WASHINGTON D.C., August 9, 2022 –Earlier today, President Biden signed into law the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, which also authorized “Community” becoming the seventh category of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards. This bill authorizes American communities to apply for and receive presidential-level recognition for efforts to systematically improve community performance across all sectors and collectively achieve better community outcomes. Communities now join American businesses and nonprofit organizations in applying continuous improvement practices to improve community outcomes related to health and wellness, educational attainment, economic vitality, and quality of life.

Since 2013, an initiative led by the nonprofit organization Communities of Excellence 2026 (COE 2026) brought communities across the nation together to participate in a pilot program using the evidence-based Baldrige Excellence Framework. The Framework was originally developed for the manufacturing, service and small business sectors. Now, that same proven and successful approach can be applied across community sectors to improve how communities are run.

“Congress has now affirmed the important role of communities and the fundamental truth that ‘For America to sustain its vitality, promote opportunity and create a more equitable society during its second 250 years of existence, we must improve the performance of communities and the people who lead and live in them.’ Helping fulfill that vision will be our focus and our work for many years to come.” Lowell C. Kruse, Chair and Co-Founder, Communities of Excellence 2026

Leaders in 26 U.S. pilot communities are currently working to build leadership and decision-making systems using the Communities of Excellence Framework. They collaboratively create community solutions that can’t be achieved by a single sector or organization by developing shared community strategies and community scorecards, and engaging residents in community planning and action to address their most pressing challenges and achieve more equitable outcomes.

"Our resolve to improve key outcomes has never been stronger, while acknowledging significant challenges remain to the health and wellbeing of many in our communities. Communities of Excellence 2026 provides a proven framework to enhance our ability to achieve improved outcomes. This systems approach broadens community partner support, is anchored in data and moves shared community concerns and efforts toward a common vision. It is an invaluable tool to improve performance of people’s lives in our backyards and for our nation as a whole.” Nick Macchione, Director & Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Health and Human Services, San Diego County, CA

This initiative was inspired by the success of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program and the benefits generated for organizations using the Framework. For 35 years, manufacturing, service businesses, health care, education, government, small business and nonprofit organizations have achieved outstanding business results and other outcomes, including revenue and market share, workforce engagement and retention, societal and community benefit, which has resulted in the generation of an estimated \$1 billion in economic impact in the U.S. annually.

“Enabling and fostering communities that have exceptional businesses, health, education, and social services—and therefore a better quality of life—is ultimately why Baldrige exists” said Bob Fangmeyer, Director of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. “The beauty of Communities of Excellence is that it allows us to impact entire communities all at once, rather than just one organization at a time. We look forward to implementing the new award category subject to the availability of appropriations”.

Communities can now work with one of the state and regional Baldrige-based programs to begin their community performance excellence journey. Collectively, the Alliance for Performance Excellence, the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program and Communities of Excellence 2026 evaluate over 1500 organizational and community applications using over 20,000 hours of volunteer time annually.

“The Baldrige Foundation is excited and proud to support this next great evolution of the Baldrige Framework” said Al Faber, President and CEO of the Baldrige Foundation in Washington D.C. “The Baldrige Foundation provides administrative support for COE 2026, is the sole sponsor of the COE Criteria and Framework and worked tirelessly on Capitol Hill to promote “community” as the seventh category of the Baldrige Awards securing bi-partisan support for congressional approval and funding.”

Questions about the Baldrige Award process should be directed to baldrige@nist.gov.

About Communities of Excellence 2026

Communities of Excellence 2026 is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that hosts a learning collaborative of communities, trains communities in the Baldrige-based Communities of Excellence Framework, and provides opportunities for communities to work together, share successes, challenges, ideas, and best practices, and learn from each other on their performance excellence journey. There are 26 communities with populations ranging from 7,500 to 2.8 million in 15 states impacted by COE 2026 and 22 communities currently involved in the National Learning Collaborative. For more information go to <https://www.communitiesofexcellence2026.org>.

About the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program

The Baldrige Performance Excellence Program is the nation's public-private partnership dedicated to performance excellence and is a part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology within the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Baldrige Program raises awareness about the importance of performance excellence in driving the U.S. and global economy; provides organizational assessment tools and criteria; educates leaders in businesses, schools, health care organizations, and government and nonprofit agencies about the practices of best-in-class organizations; and recognizes national role models and honors them with the only Presidential Award for performance excellence. For more information about the Baldrige Program please visit:

<https://www.nist.gov/baldrige>.

About the Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award:

The Baldrige Foundation was created as the private partner to the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program in 1988. Its mission is to ensure the long-term financial viability of the Baldrige Program and to support organizational performance excellence throughout the United States and the world. The Baldrige Program, located at NIST within the U.S. Department of Commerce, is a separate entity and is solely responsible for managing and administering the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. For more information on the Baldrige Award process visit:

<https://www.nist.gov/baldrige/baldrige-award>.

About the Alliance for Performance Excellence

The Alliance for Performance Excellence (Alliance) is a national network of Baldrige-based organizations and supporting members with a mission to grow performance excellence in support of a thriving Baldrige community. Members contribute nearly 300,000 volunteer hours and more than \$30 million per year in tools, resources, and expertise to assist organizations and communities on their journeys to excellence. This includes annually evaluating and recognizing over 1500 organizations that use the Baldrige Excellence Framework and serving as the feeder system for the national Baldrige Award. For more information, visit <https://www.baldrigealliance.org>.