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For Immediate Release

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Fifteen Communities Recognized for their Commitment to Improving Community Outcomes

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

SAN DIEGO, CA. November 21st – Last month fifteen communities received formal recognition for their commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of their residents and pursuit of community performance excellence. The communities were recognized across the three levels of the [Communities of Excellence Assessment and Recognition Program](#).

Through their collaborative efforts, these communities are prioritizing critical outcomes such as access to health care, education, and workforce development as a root indicator of prosperity. Some are uplifting a need for social justice and fair and equitable access to housing, high-speed internet, clean water, and affordable utilities. Others are addressing the need for an entrepreneurial ecosystem that better supports innovation the connects their economic opportunity to national and global markets.

Leaders in these communities 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.

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.

In a recognition ceremony on October 20th, 2022, special guest Molly Baldrige congratulated recipients: *“There is a lot to celebrate here. Communities are the backbone of this country, and they can be the saving grace and answer to the fractions we are currently experiencing in the U.S. Essentially the mission of the Baldrige program is to benefit all U.S. residents through improved competitiveness. Until now, however, the focus has been on accomplishing that purpose through a single organization. Partnering with Communities of Excellence 2026 enables the Baldrige program to carry out that mission on a much broader level, with the potential for greater reach and impact.”*

A recording of the recognition ceremony as well as a list of the 15 communities recognized is available on the [Communities of Excellence 2026 website](#).

In August, President Biden signed 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.

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 25 communities currently involved in the National Learning Collaborative. For more information go to <https://www.communitiesofexcellence2026.org>.

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