

From Framework to Frontline:

Advancing Resident Outcomes Through the AHCA Quality Awards Process

Presented by Renee Ridling, MS, LNHA
AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Judge, Examiner

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Session Objectives

- Use the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework to drive quality outcomes (the AHCA/NCAL Quality Award criteria)
 - Use organizational self-analysis to improve performance outcomes
 - Use the criteria to identify organizational gaps, opportunities
 - Develop systematic approaches to address identified gaps.
 - Recognize parallels between criteria and regulatory requirements
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Let's get acquainted

- Award recipients? Bronze or Silver?
 - Administrators/DONS/Others?
 - Potential Quality Award Applicants?
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What is the AHCA/NCAL Criteria all about?

The Quality Award Criteria is a Framework for performance

- A 3 level, progressive award program for Long-term Care, Assisted Living and Residential Care facilities
 - Established in 1996 and is now the largest Baldrige-based program in the U.S.
 - The program is based on the core values and criteria of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program.
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What is the AHCA/NCAL Criteria all about?

- Progressively higher standards for performance at each of the 3 award levels
- Moving through the levels enables organizations to improve performance related to outcomes, care and services.
- Provides national, external validation of organizational performance excellence.





How does this process help your organization?

Performance Improvement: A proven framework to make improvements in any clinical, quality or operational outcome area. *The majority of applicants identify performance improvement as a main reason in applying for an award.*

Team Engagement: Your team working toward a common goal and achieving desired results and quality outcomes through continuous learning and improvement. *The application process is a team building activity to engage staff across all levels of your organization.*

Regulatory Demands: The criteria prepares providers for regulatory demands such as QAPI and FRA requirements and CMS Requirements of Participation (RoP). *Quality improvement and outcomes are key components to regulatory compliance.*





Driving Quality Organizational Outcomes

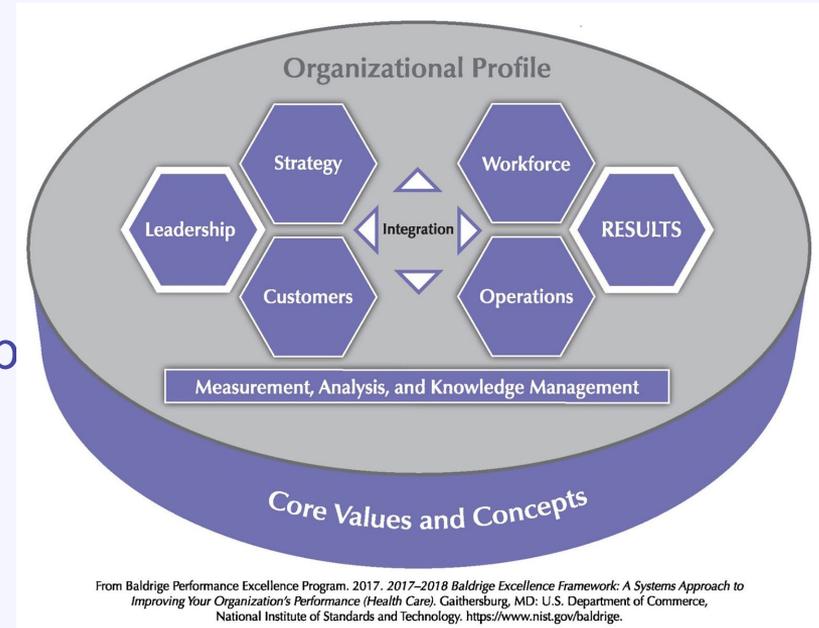
The Baldrige Excellence Framework provides a systems approach to organizational management, performance improvements and improved quality outcomes. The Core Values within the Framework are:

- Systems perspective
 - Visionary leadership
 - Patient-focused excellence
 - Valuing people
 - Organizational learning
 - Focus on success
 - Managing for innovation
 - Management by fact
 - Societal responsibility and community health
 - Ethics and transparency
 - Delivering value and results
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Driving Quality Organizational Outcomes

The criteria is

- Outcome-focused
- Evidence-based
- Systematic management model
- Leading edge, validated leadership
- Performance driven practice

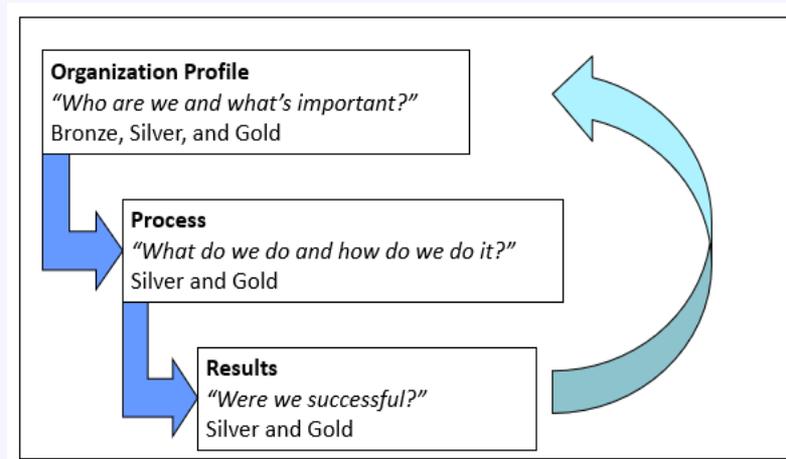


Driving Quality Organizational Outcomes

Award Criteria is a Management Document with 3 Components

a.k.a.

Your AHCA/NCAL
Quality Award Application!





AHCA/NCAL Award Criteria Categories

Organizational Profile

Key factors, competitive situation

Category 1 – Leadership

- 1.1 Senior Leadership
- 1.2 Governance and Societal Responsibility

Category 2 – Strategy

- 2.1 Strategy Development
- 2.2 Strategy Implementation

Category 3 – Customer

- 3.1 Customer Focus
- 3.2 Customer Engagement

Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, & Knowledge Management

- 4.1 Measurement, Analysis and Performance
- 4.2 Information and Knowledge Management

Category 5 – Workforce

- 5.1 Workforce Environment
- 5.2 Workforce Engagement

Category 6 – Operations

- 6.1 Work Processes
 - 6.2 Operational Effectiveness
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Driving Quality Organizational Outcomes

- The AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Criteria helps create organizational alignment
 - Leadership supports the overall performance and organizational strategy for better quality outcomes
 - Effective alignment of improvement efforts leads to better outcome results and competitive advantage
 - Use the Criteria to *focus, align, and accelerate* organizational strategy and performance efforts
 - *Organizations that achieve improved outcomes and results are the ones that view and use the Criteria as an management improvement tool, not just as an Award application*
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Driving Quality Organizational Outcomes

The AHCA/NCAL Quality Award process can help...

...improve organizational *accountability*

...create organizational *sustainability*

...achieve organizational *alignment*

...promote organizational *improved results and outcomes*

...improve organizational workforce *retention*

...provide for organizational *reward and recognition*





Criteria requirements identify key focus areas

Areas of focus in the criteria include:

- Strategic planning, development and implementation
 - Agility and resilience
 - Workforce retention and readiness
 - Diversity, equity, and inclusion (residents, staff)
 - Accessibility and fair treatment (residents, staff)
 - Knowledge security and cybersecurity
- 



Key focus area - Strategic planning and development

Strategic planning and development refers to the organizational approach to preparing for the future and considers acceptable levels of risk. Strategy is directed toward becoming a high performing organization that is reliable, focused on customizing service, being an employer of choice, and meeting community and population health care needs.

Strategic planning and development will include developing goals and objectives in key areas of focus including:

- Agility and resilience
 - Workforce retention
 - Diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - Accessibility and fair treatment
 - Knowledge, security, and cybersecurity
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Key focus area - Strategic planning and development

Strategy Development Process: 2.1a(1) How do you conduct your strategic planning? What are your short- and long-term planning horizons? Does the process address the potential need for change?

Strategic Opportunities and Intelligent Risks: 2.1a(3) How do you identify strategic opportunities and stimulate innovation?

Key Strategic Objectives: 2.1b(1) What are your organization's key strategic objectives and their most important related goals? (What are your key focus areas for outcomes and results?)





Key focus area - Strategic planning and development

Where do you start your organizational strategic planning and development process? You can start by identifying:

Strategic Advantages: Organizational features/benefits that may have decisive influence on future success.

Strategic Challenges: External influences/pressures that may negatively affect future success.

Strategic Opportunities: What are prospects for new or changed services, processes, or markets.





Key focus area - Strategic planning and development

Strategic Objectives: Focus on both internal and external situations and conditions, advantages, and challenges facing the organization and are used to set direction to facilitate quality outcomes, competitiveness, guide resource allocation, and ensure long-term organizational success.

Strategic Goals: Performance levels/results the organization intends to attain. Goals guide actions and are quantitative targets for achieving outcomes and overall success. Goals clarify strategic objectives, focus on a common end, provide a basis for measuring progress and outcomes.

SMART Goals: Goals used for strategic planning and development should be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. These goals must be clear, trackable, and achievable to promote overall organizational success.





Key focus area - Strategic planning and development

How does the process start? Where do you begin?

An **Organizational SWOT Analysis** is a great place to start.

Exactly what is a **SWOT**?

It is a framework used to evaluate an organization's competitive position and to develop strategic planning. SWOT analysis assesses internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential. SWOT analysis is designed to facilitate a realistic, fact-based, data-driven look at the strategic advantages and challenges facing the organization.





Key focus area - Strategic planning and development

SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths - Internal factors, positive attributes that provide an advantage over competitors. The things you do well, services you are known for, what sets you apart from others who offer similar services.

Weaknesses - Negative attributes that limit performance or hinder growth. Things to improve, fix, or avoid. Examples may include lack of financial resources, high turnover, low customer satisfaction, or poor quality of care.

Opportunities - External, favorable situations or conditions that can be leveraged to achieve goals that are a benefit or advantage to the organization. These may include a demand for your services, a new market segment or niche, a new partnership or collaboration.

Threats - Unfavorable situations or conditions that can harm business. Risks or challenges that need to be recognized. Some examples may be declining demand for current services, a new competitor, negative publicity, a regulatory change.





Key focus area - Agility and Resilience

Agility enables organizations to rapidly respond to emergencies and operational changes or take advantage of opportunities and address challenges.

The capacity for rapid change and flexibility in operations to achieve results.

Resilience means being able to respond quickly to both opportunities and threats - to adapt operations, action plans, workforce plans, and organizational processes.

The ability to anticipate, prepare for and recover from disasters, emergencies, and other disruptions.

Agility and Resilience is the ability to recognize when change is needed and to respond, shift, and “bounce back” or continue operating during a disruption.





Key focus area - Agility and Resilience

Agility and Resilience are key to organizational performance in these areas:

Leadership: 1.1c(1) How do senior leaders create an environment for success now and in the future? *How do leaders cultivate agility and resilience, accountability...*

Strategy development: 2.1a (1) Strategic planning process. *How does this process address the potential need for change, changing initiatives, agility and resilience...*

Strategy implementation: 2.2b Action Plan Modification. *How do you recognize when circumstances require a shift in action plans and rapid execution of new plans?*





Key focus area - Agility and Resilience

Workforce: 5.1a(4) How do you organize and manage your workforce? *How do you reinforce organizational resilience, agility, and a patient/customer and business focus...*

Work Process design: 6.1a(4) How do you design key work processes to support key requirements? *How do you incorporate new technology, knowledge, the need for agility into these processes?*

Operational effectiveness: 6.2(b) How do you manage your supply chain network? *How do you mitigate risk and enhance supply chain agility and resilience?*





Key focus area - Agility and Resilience

Ultimately, Agility and Resilience ensure your organization's ability to continue operations in situations such as disasters, emergencies, and other disruptions and recover from these events.

Business Continuity and Resilience: 6.2c(3) How do you ensure that your organization can anticipate, prepare for, and recover from disaster, emergencies, and other disruptions?





Key focus area - Workforce Retention

The nature of work in healthcare has changed. Understanding key drivers of **Employee Engagement** that lead to **Workforce Retention** is critical.

Engagement factors such as employee health and safety, job quality, and retention have become more important since the “great resignation of 2020.” Difficulty finding new workforce members continues to be an economic trend.

The criteria has a renewed focus on **Workforce Engagement** and retention, including promoting high performance work, how to use, assess, and improve workforce engagement.





Key focus area - Workforce Retention

Workforce has its own criteria category and specifically focuses on the Workforce Environment and Workforce Engagement.

Workforce Change: 5.1a(3) How do you prepare your workforce for changing capability and capacity needs? *Balance workforce needs to ensure continuity, prevent reductions, minimize impact from reductions; prepare for and manage periods of workforce growth or shortages...*

Workforce Compensation and Benefits: 5.1b(2) How do you support your workforce via compensation and benefits? *How do your policies support fairness? How do your benefits address the needs of a diverse workforce?*





Key focus area - Workforce Retention

Drivers of Engagement: 5.2a(1) How do you determine the key drivers of workforce engagement? *How do you determine drivers for different workforce groups and segments?*

Assessment of Engagement and Retention: 5.2a(2) How do you assess workforce engagement? *What assessment methods and measures do you use to determine workforce satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement? How do you use these and other indicators to assess and improve engagement and retention?*





Key focus area - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility

Diversity includes more than gender, race, ethnicity. Diversity also includes factors such as age, education, or disability. This may apply to both the workforce and resident groups. Successful organizations capitalize on the diverse backgrounds, characteristics, knowledge, skills, and creativity of people.

Equity means supporting fair treatment for all residents, patients, other customers, and workforce members within the organization.

Inclusion refers to enabling full participation for all residents, patients, customers, and workforce members and supporting them to feel a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Accessibility is an element of the organization's culture, climate, and environment. This includes fair treatment of residents, patients, customers, and workforce members.





Key focus area - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility were added to the criteria in 2021 and have become more prevalent in the most recent version of the criteria in the following areas:

Patient, Customer experience: 3.2a(1) How do you build and manage resident-patient/customer relationships? *How do you build a resident-patient/customer-focused organizational culture? Meet resident-patient/customer requirements and expectations?*

Fair Treatment: 3.2a(4) How do your resident-patient/customer experience processes promote and ensure fair treatment for different patients, resident-patient groups, other customer groups, and market segments?





Key focus area - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility

New Workforce Members: 5.1a(2) How do you recruit, hire, and onboard new workforce members? *How do you ensure your workforce represents the diversity of ideas, cultures, and thinking in your hiring and resident-patient communities.*

Workplace Environment: 5.1b(1) How do you address workforce health and accessibility for the workforce? *What are your performance measures, improvement goals, workplace environmental factors?*

Workforce Compensation and Benefits: 5.1b(2) How do you support your workforce via compensation and benefits? *How do your policies related to compensation address fairness? How do your benefits address the needs of a diverse workforce, different workforce groups and segments?*





Key focus area - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility

Organizational Culture: 5.2b How do you foster an organizational culture characterized by open communication, high performance, resident-patient safety, and an engaged workforce? *How do ensure your organizational culture promotes empowerment, equity, and inclusion; and benefits from the diversity of ideas, cultures, and thinking of your workforce?*

Equity and Inclusion: 5.2c(4) How do you ensure that your performance management, performance development, and career development processes promote equity and inclusion for a diverse workforce and different workforce groups and segments?





Key focus area - Knowledge, Security, and Cybersecurity

Information and knowledge management encompasses organizational data, technology systems, clinical and financial software used for electronic records, and how sensitive data and information is protected against loss.

Data and Information: 4.2a(1) Quality How do you verify and ensure the quality of organizational data and information? **4.2a(2) Availability** How do you ensure the availability of organizational data and information?

Cybersecurity: 4.2a(3) How do you secure sensitive or privileged data and information technology assets, and internet-enabled systems? This includes managing physical and digital data and information; ensuring key networked, cloud-based systems to ensure confidentiality and maintain awareness of security and cybersecurity threats.





Key focus area - Knowledge, Security, and Cybersecurity

Organizational Knowledge: 4.2b(1) How do you build and manage organizational knowledge? To include: collecting and transferring knowledge among the workforce, analyzing data and information, and embedding learning into the organizational operations.

Best Practices: 4.2b(2) How do you identify and share best practices in your organization? How do you determine internal and external sources for best practices?? How do you best practices and refinements within your organization?

Pursuit of Innovation: 4.2c How do you determine which opportunities for innovation to pursue? How do you determine when the opportunity results in meaningful change for the organization?





Regulatory compliance requirements

CMS Quality Assessment and Performance Improvement (QAPI) requirement purpose:

“QAPI will take many nursing homes into a new realm in quality- a systematic, comprehensive, data-driven, proactive approach to performance management and improvement.” (CMS.gov- NH QAPI)

- AHCA research indicates that 90% of Quality Award applicants identify performance improvement as a primary reason in deciding to apply for an award.
- Silver and Gold recipient data supports superior performance in key quality outcome areas such as:

30-day hospital readmission, off-label use of antipsychotics, 5-Star ratings, occupancy rates, and operating margin





Regulatory Requirement: CMS QAPI Plan Elements

Element 1: Design and Scope...

Element 2: Governance and Leadership ...

Element 3: Feedback, Data Systems, and Monitoring ...

Element 4: Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs)...

Element 5: Systematic Analysis and Systemic Action.





Regulatory Requirement: CMS Facility Assessment

Part 1: Resident Profile – types of residents, related care needs

Part 2: Services and care required to meet identified resident needs

Part 3: Resources (staff, training, etc.) needed for care daily and in emergencies, synthesize and use the assessment findings and data, and evaluate processes and plan for future assessments



AHCA -CMS QAPI -FA Crossover Elements

QAPI PLAN ELEMENTS <i>CMS requirements</i>	BALDRIGE FRAMEWORK <i>Where does it fit the plan?</i>
Design and Scope	Organizational Profile: Organizational Description Organizational Position (Competitive position, Comparative Data, Strategic Context)
Governance and Leadership	Category 1 – Leadership and Governance
Feedback, Data Systems, and Monitoring	Category 2 – Strategy Development Category 3 – Customers Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Category 5 – Workforce Category 6 – Operations (Work processes, operational effectiveness.)
Performance Improvement Projects	Organizational Profile – (Performance Improvement System) Category 2 – Strategy Development Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Category 6 – Operations (Work processes, operational effectiveness.)
Systematic Analysis and Systemic Action	Organizational Profile – (Performance Improvement System) Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Category 6 – Operations (Work processes, operational effectiveness.) Category 7 – Results (Health care, process, customers, workforce, leadership and governance, financial/ market/ strategy)

AHCA -CMS QAPI -FA Crossover Elements

FACILITY ASSESSMENT <i>CMS requirements</i>	BALDRIGE FRAMEWORK <i>Where does it fit the assessment?</i>
Part 1: Resident profile Numbers, diseases/conditions, physical and cognitive disabilities, acuity, and ethnic/cultural/religious factors that impact care	Organizational Profile: Organizational Description Category 3 – Customers (Service offerings, fair treatment, customer experiences) Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge
Part 2: Services and care offered Based on resident needs (includes types of care your resident population requires)	Category 2 – Strategy Development Category 3 – Customers (Service offerings, fair treatment, customer experiences) Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Category 6 – Operations (Work processes, operational effectiveness, Safety, emergencies, business continuity.)
Part 3: Facility resources needed To provide competent care for residents, including staff, staffing plan, staff training/education and competencies, education and training, physical environment and building needs, and other resources, including agreements with third parties, health information technology resources and systems, a facility-based and community-based risk assessment, and other information as appropriate.	Organizational Profile: Organizational Description and Organizational Position Category 1 – Leadership and Governance Category 2 – Strategy Development Category 3 – Customers (Service offerings, fair treatment, customer experiences) Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge (Performance improvement, innovation, data security/cybersecurity) Category 5 – Workforce (Capability/capacity, high performance, learning/development, equity/inclusion) Category 6 – Operations (Work processes, operational effectiveness, Safety, emergencies, business continuity.)



So why should you begin the Quality Award Journey?

The **Baldrige Excellence Framework** empowers your organization to:

- Reach organizational goals
- Improve results and outcomes
- Become more competitive

The Baldrige criteria is a proven foundation of high performing organizations that are successful now and in the future.





2026 Quality Award Program Important Dates

Available now:

2026 Bronze, Silver, and Gold AHCA/NCAL Award Criteria Packets at www.ahcancal.org/Quality/National-Quality-Award-Program

Intent to Apply August 13 - November 13, 2025, 8 p.m. EST

Application Deadline - January 22, 2026, 8 p.m. EST





MHCA 2026 Quality Award Workshops

Gold Quality Award:

Gold Webinar, September 4, 2 -4 p.m.

Gold In-person Reviews, November 13-14, (times TBD)

Silver Quality Award:

Silver Workshop, September 30, 1-6 pm and October 1, 8:30 am-4:30 pm

Silver Coaching Calls, starting October 17 through January 16, 2026

Bronze Quality Award:

Bronze Workshop, October 29, 8:30 am-4:30 pm





Contact Information

Renee Ridling, MS, LNHA, Executive Director
Gingerbread House, Inc.
1401 Truman Ave Rolla, MO 65401
W: 573-364-4398 C: 573-201-6838
rridling@gmail.com

AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Program:

Panel of Judges (2018-present)

Gold Examiner (2012-present-Independent)

Silver Examiner (2008-present-Independent)

Quality Award Recipient: Bronze (2008, 2016); Silver (2009, 2017);

Gold (2014)





Presentation Resources

AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Program,

www.ahcancal.org/quality_improvement/quality_award

Baldrige Excellence Framework, Health Care

www.nist.gov/Baldrige/healthcare

Core Values Partners, Inc., Paul Grizzell, President

www.corevaluespartners.com





Thank you for your time and attention

Good Luck and Enjoy

Your Quality Journey!

