

Virginia SPOA

Examiner Guide 2012



Our Mission

To cultivate continuous performance improvement and success for the communities we serve.





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United States Senate Productivity and Quality Award Program for Virginia
Post Office Box, 6099, Suffolk, Virginia 23433 757.215.8881

August 2011

Fellow Virginians,

The U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award for Virginia (Virginia SPQA) is celebrating its 29th year of serving organizations in Virginia and serving District of Columbia organizations since 2005. From its beginnings, Virginia SPQA has been a national leader in spreading excellence in organizational performance. Every organization in Virginia and the District of Columbia that participates is a winner!

Virginia SPQA endorses the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence used by hundreds of organizations to stay abreast of competition and to improve their performance.

Whether large or small, in manufacturing, business service, education, health care or government, organizations can benefit from the application of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence.

Your interest in serving as an Examiner is highly valued. We hope you will take this challenge and become part of an elite group of volunteers in service to the Commonwealth and the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

James Webb
U.S. Senate

Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senate

Virginia SPQA Key Dates for Examiners

	Date	Activity	
Discovery Program Examiner activity is year around in six-week cycles initiated by Submissions	September 7-8, 2011	Virginia SPQA Forum for Excellence, Richmond, VA	
	September 1, 2011	Examiner Recruitment Opens – Application Available On-Line *	
	November 17-18, 2011	Criteria Workshop (Northern Virginia Area)	
	December 12-13, 2011	Criteria Workshop (Hampton Roads Area)	
	December 1, 2011	Examiner Recruitment Closes	
	January 9-10, 2012***	Criteria Workshop (Richmond Area)	
	January 11-12, 2012*** January 18-19, 2012***	Examiner Training ** Examiner Training **	
	January 13, 2012 January 20, 2012	Recognition Program Training for Team Leadership, Editors, Mentors, Judges (4 hours)	
	April 24 - May 4, 2012	Recognition Program Site Visits Conducted	
	June 1, 2012	Recognition Program notification of Award Recipients	
	June 2012	Criteria Workshop (Roanoke Area)	
	June 1, 2012	Recognition Program delivery of Feedback Reports	
	June 18-July 13, 2012	Recognition Program Applicant Feedback Meetings	
	July 14, 2012	SPQA Forward Day	
	September 2012	Virginia SPQA Forum for Excellence	
		Discovery Program Examiner Activity	

The information above summarizes key dates and activities relevant to Virginia SPQA Programs and its Examiner Community of Practice. This Guide provides additional information regarding the key dates and activities. Dates are relevant to either/or both the Recognition and Discovery Program. ***Specific training dates are subject to change.*** Individuals who are part of the Virginia SPQA master mailing list are notified well in advance of training dates, location and registration information. To be part of the list, email secretary@spqa-va.org with a request to be added.

* Returning Examiners complete an abbreviated application.

** The Examiner Training noted above is required annually for Examiners participating in the Recognition Program, but optional for returning Examiners who are only participating in the Discovery Program.

*** Dates are tentative.

About Virginia SPQA & its Examiners

The United States Senate Productivity and Quality Award for Virginia (Virginia SPQA) recognizes and provides performance improvement feedback to organizations in Virginia and the District of Columbia using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (CPE). This feedback is based on the evaluation of dedicated Examiners. Virginia SPQA offers two programs where Examiners are critical to success. Separate Guides geared to participants for these programs are published on the Virginia SPQA web site. Potential Examiners are encouraged to review those program guides.



Recognition Program. In this program, organizations “apply” for the United States Senate Productivity & Quality Award Medallion. The Recognition Program is similar to the national Malcolm Baldrige award program. Award applicants submit written applications based on the CPE. Each application is assigned to a Team, and each Examiner on the Team conducts an independent evaluation. Each Examiner reviews, writes an analysis, and scores submitted applications. After the independent review, the Team comes together for their individual findings and scoring of the application, and produces a Consensus Report. Based on the Consensus Report, higher scoring applications are selected for a Site Visit and the Team visits the organization. Examiners then prepare final feedback reports for the Applicants. Site Visits may require travel, and travel expenses may be reimbursed by Virginia SPQA. A panel of Judges reviews the Team’s consensus analysis of each Application, as well as findings from the Site Visit, and makes Award Recommendations to the Virginia SPQA Board of Directors.

In addition to providing a service for the applicant, Examiners assigned to an award application receive an **extraordinary learning experience** – especially when a site visit is conducted. Examiner service for the Recognition Program, Virginia SPQA’s premier program, relates to the most important aspect of Virginia SPQA’s mission. An appropriate ratio of experienced and new examiners is essential to ensure the best assessment of applications for United States Senate Productivity and Quality Award and/or the alternative Award levels within the Recognition Program. Examiner team size varies for this Program but normally ranges from five to eight individuals.



Discovery Program. In this program, organizations “submit” a self-assessment based on a template provided by Virginia SPQA. The Self-Assessment concept is based on CPE fundamentals, but at a more basic level. Although participation is recognized, there are no awards or site visits. For the Discovery Program, smaller Examiner teams consisting of 2-3 individuals are normally adequate. While exceptions may be made, the Discovery Program relies on Examiners who have participated in the Recognition Program. For the Discovery Program, the Examiner Team develops written “observations” based on the face value of the self-assessment submitted by the organization.

To the extent practical, and ensuring there is no conflict of interest, efforts are made in both Programs to assign Examiners to evaluate and/or review organization applications and submissions in sectors (e.g. government, healthcare, education, business, etc.) where they have experience. Experienced individuals, supplemented by others of differing backgrounds, work to produce optimal perspective.

Program Cycles

The Recognition Program works on an annual schedule with defined dates for Examiner training, review, site visits, and feedback development. For the Recognition Program, the Examiner’s time is mostly focused during the first five months of the calendar year with specific timeframes for each activity to take place. The Discovery Program operates year around. While there are no Discovery site visits, there are still defined steps and timeframes within the actual submission and feedback period that the Examiner Team must follow.

Benefits of Being a Virginia SPQA Examiner

Virginia SPQA Examiners are experts in business, health care, and education selected from industry, service businesses, professional and trade organizations, government agencies, other not-for-profit groups, and the ranks of the retired. The typical Examiner is someone who has a professional background in organizational planning and performance improvement. Virginia SPQA Examiners receive training in the CPE, as well as training in how to use the CPE as the basis for evaluating applications in the Recognition Program, or self-assessments in the Discovery Program. Examiners can take this learning experience and become performance excellence champions within their own organizations. Many organizations have found this to be very valuable in their own journey to performance excellence.

In addition to a desire to have returning Examiners, new Examiner applicants are welcomed. Mentoring is available for new Examiners to help orient them and facilitate their growth and development. The skills and experiences gained as a result of being an Examiner are also valuable professional development opportunities, especially in the areas of analytical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation. The letter of appreciation, signed by the Senators can be an important addition to one's personal file, and the designation as a Virginia SPQA Examiner can be a great addition to one's resume. Continued personal learning and career development as well as continued education for recertification are additional benefits of serving as an Examiner. Further, many Virginia SPQA Examiners have become Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program.

Virginia SPQA Examiners can take advantage of opportunities to network with other professionals in a variety of career fields such as Quality, Organizational Development, Human Resources and Leadership, just to name a few, as well as being a part of Virginia SPQA's CPE Community of Practice. Examiners are also called upon to evaluate their experience and make recommendations for program improvements to the Virginia SPQA Board of Directors.

At a practical level, Examiner Training is provided at no cost and Examiners in the related year are guests at the Virginia Forum for Excellence. Examiners may also receive discounts on other events.

Virginia SPQA CPE Community of Practice

Examiners contribute significantly to the Virginia SPQA Program through outreach and educational activities, and by serving as ambassadors for the Program in Virginia and the District of Columbia. Current and past Examiners are part of a unique group of individuals which helps to enable the Virginia SPQA CPE Community of Practice. An evolving concept, Virginia SPQA's CPE Community of Practice vision is to create a group of individuals who can network and share their experiences and best practices.

Examiner Eligibility, Application & Ethics

Individuals apply to become Examiners and/or renew their status for acceptance in the coming Program cycles. Examiners must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States and be located in the United States or its territories. No one is denied consideration or appointment as an Examiner on the grounds of race, creed, national origin, age, gender or disability. Virginia SPQA Program's credibility ultimately relies on its Examiners. As such those serving in this role must also achieve and maintain certain educational and performance requirements.

Virginia SPQA Examiner applications for both new and returning candidates will soon be open year round. In addition to basic contact information, the on-line application process asks questions intended to help assess an applicant's level of experience with the CPE and as such, how to assign individuals to Teams. The on-line process also provides a simplified method for returning Examiners to update their information, including the satisfaction of the *CPE Educational Requirements*.

CPE Educational Requirements

Individuals who apply to become an Examiner for the first time and/or renew their Examiner status are expected to have 8-16 hours of CPE Training within two years of the application and renewal period. This requirement can be met through a) attending Virginia SPQA's "An Inquirer's Guide to the Criteria for Performance Excellence" class, offered at a modest cost and conducted regionally throughout the year; b) attending "An Explorer's Guide to the Criteria for Performance Excellence" offered in conjunction with the Virginia Forum for Excellence or, c) through a comparable training program including "on-site" Virginia SPQA training. Because some regional classes occur in the fall, this requirement can be met conditionally as part of the application or renewal process. Since the Baldrige CPE is updated every two years, this ongoing requirement works to ensure Examiners maintain their foundational knowledge associated with the assessment methodology.

A Perk for Returning Examiners:
A returning Examiner privilege for 2012 is a financial discount associated with attending a regional offering of "An Inquirer's Guide to the Criteria for Performance Excellence. Please contact secretary@spqa-va.org for the registration information.

NOTE for Returning Examiners: Because the approach to examining a Discovery Program Submission is different than for the Recognition Program, returning Examiners are exempt from the January Examiner *Training requirement provided they intend only to be part of a Discovery Team and their CPE Educational Requirements are current.*

Examiner Educational Requirements

In addition to the CPE Educational Requirements, Virginia SPQA also requires training which focuses on the fundamentals of evaluating an application, including scoring practices and writing a feedback report.

Individuals who apply to become an Examiner for the first time and/or renew their status with the intention of examining an application for the Medallion as part of the Recognition Program must attend Virginia SPQA's

"Examiner Fundamentals" training. Normally offered in January, this opportunity is mandatory for new and returning Examiners who wish to be part of a Recognition Program Team. In addition to the learning associated with this training, for most Examiners this is the first opportunity to meet potential Team Members. "Examiner Fundamentals" training is offered at no cost but is done so with the expectation that individuals who serve will meet their commitments.

Examiner Application and Renewal Period

Individuals who aspire to become an Examiner or wish to renew the experience as part of the Recognition and/or Discovery Programs in 2012 will be able to apply on-line starting September 1, 2011 through December 1, 2011. *Please note that returning Examiners submit a simplified application.* In addition to ensuring we have a capable Examiner Community, this process helps us understand our capacity to respond to Recognition and Discovery Program demand.

"Remind me to be an Examiner."

Interested in being an Examiner or returning? Bookmark these dates to visit the web site or tell us to put you on the "reminder list" for this year or the future. You can get on the "reminder list" anytime during the year by simply contacting secretary@spqa-va.org with your contact information and the request.

Examiner of Record Designation

New Examiner applicants are notified of *provisional* acceptance between December 1 and 15, 2011 to become a member of the Board of Examiners for Virginia SPQA. Status as a member of the Board of Examiners is achieved by fully completing expectations as a contributing member of a Recognition Program Examiner Team application review and feedback cycle. Members of the Board of Examiners are officially recognized at the annual Virginia Forum for Excellence.

Code of Ethical Conduct

Provisional and returning Examiners of Record are expected to carry out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the Code of Ethical Conduct (see last page) and must commit to such as part of the application and renewal period. All materials relating to an Examination are confidential and strict confidentiality procedures, reviewed at Examiner Training, are observed.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

Provisional and returning Examiners of Record must provide information regarding conflicts of interest with respect to program participants and applicants. Disclosure includes employers, significant ownership, and client relationships. Such information will be used only for purposes of Examiner assignments and will otherwise be kept confidential.

Adherence to the Process & Methods

Whether part of a Recognition or Discovery Program Team, Provisional and returning Examiners of Record are expected to conduct examinations fairly and competently within the prescribed approaches and methods associated with each Program.

Assignment and Compensation

Supply and Demand NOTE

The need for Examiners in a given year depends on how many organizations participate in the Recognition and/or Discovery Programs. Normally it works well, but there may be times when the Examiner supply for the year is greater than the need. In these cases, Virginia SPQA works to make accommodations.

Examiner Assignment

Virginia SPQA seeks to provide the fairest, most competent evaluation for its Programs. Accordingly, Examiners are assigned on the basis of their knowledge and experience, consistent with the requirements to avoid conflicts of interest, to apportion the application load equitably, and to adhere to Program schedules. To the extent possible, attempts are made to balance each Team with members who have experience within the sectors, i.e., government, education, manufacturing, business, service and technology, healthcare, etc.

Examiner Compensation

The SPQA Program is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization. The fees for submitting organizations are kept to a minimum to encourage broad participation. Therefore, Virginia SPQA operates with maximum voluntary support. Individual Examiner expenses for Recognition Program site visits and feedback meetings are reimbursed in accordance with Virginia SPQA reimbursement policies. Discovery Team meetings are conducted by teleconference and do not require travel.

Virginia SPQA encourages employer support of Examiner expenses. Reimbursement is not provided for expenses incurred for training or consensus meetings.

Time Commitments

In addition to meeting the training requirements, the amount of time devoted to being an Examiner varies depending on whether the focus is the Recognition or Discovery Program. Even here there can be variances. For example, in the Recognition Program, the time is reduced if a site visit is not conducted. Other factors include how well the organization has prepared their application (or self-assessment in the Discovery Program). Likewise, Team Leaders can expect to spend additional time simply because of the role.

Teams Can Customize Schedules within a Framework

Whether working independently or together as a Team, Examiners have flexibility to schedule their time provided key deliverables are met. **Provisional and Returning Examiners must be willing to honor the time commitments, including potential travel and be able to accommodate critical review periods.**

Recognition Program Time Estimates for Examiners

The majority of Examiner activity in the Recognition Program occurs between mid-January and mid-May, potentially shorter if there is no site visit. Virginia SPQA recognizes that unplanned situations occur which could impact participation in a Site Visit or Applicant meeting. As such, evidence of commitment for acceptance and/or maintaining Examiner of Record status focuses on the level of individual engagement and contribution during the total process. The table below shows estimates of time related to the Phase of the Recognition Program for the typical Examiner. These estimates are based on historical averages.

Phase	Event	Time	Dates
Training	Criteria Training <i>(For all new and returning Examiners who have not received this or comparable training in the last 2 years.)</i>	8-16 hours	See page 1 for dates Register via the website
	Examiner Training Pre-Work	8-12 hours	Materials & instructions sent to Examiners approximately 2-weeks prior to training
	Examiner Training	16 hours	January 11-12, 2012 or January 18-19, 2012
	Training for Team Leaders, Asst. TL, Editors & Mentors	4 hours	January 13 or 20,, 2012
Evaluation	Independent Review	40-48 hours	January 20 thru February 20, 2012
	Team Consensus Meeting	10-16 hours	February 21 thru March 18, 2012
Site Visit <i>(If Selected)</i>	Site Visit Training	2 hours	April 2 thru April 5, 2012
	Site Visit Preparation	8-20 hours	April 5 thru April 23, 2012
	Site Visit	24-30 hours	April 24 thru May 4, 2012
Report	Feedback Report	8-12 hours	May 4 thru May 21, 2012
Feedback	Applicant Meeting	4 hours	June 18 thru July 13, 2012
Total Estimated Hours		137-180	January - June 2012

Discovery Program Time Estimates

Examiner activity associated with the Discovery Program occurs year around. While less labor intensive than the Recognition Program, Examiners who sign up for this Program must still perform within the timeframes of the Program. Organizations submit their Intent to Participate form which triggers the creation of a 2-3 person Examination Team. For Discovery, other than training and Team formation, the effort starts in earnest for a six week regimen after the team receives the Organization's Submission. The table below shows estimates of time required for each Phase of the Discovery Program for the typical Examiner. The Phases and related Events are recommendations, Team alterations to this approach are acceptable provided the Feedback Report is available for editing in Week 6 or sooner.

Phase	Event	Time	Dates
Training	Criteria Training <i>(For all new and returning Examiners who have not received this or comparable training in the last 2 years.)</i>	14-16 hours	See page 1 for dates Register via the website
	Examiner Training Pre-Work*	8-12 hours	Materials & instructions sent to Examiners approximately 2-weeks prior to training
	Examiner Training*	16 hours	January 11-12, 2012 or January 18-19, 2012
	Discovery Examiner Tutorial	30 minutes to 2 hours	Independent or by webcast as scheduled
Team & Schedule Formulation	Intent to Participate Received, Team Formed and Six-Week Schedule created.	N/A	Within the 60 days of receipt of Intent to Participate and prior to Submission receipt.
Independent Evaluation	Team Members Review Submission & Prepare for Week 2	8 hours	Week 1 of Self-Assessment review
Team Organization	Team Telecon to review Submission, Identify Category response Leads and themes	2 hours	Week 2 of Self-Assessment review
Feedback Development	Category Leads write "Observations" v.1.0	3-4 hours per Category	Week 3-4 of Self-Assessment review
Team Consensus	Team Telecon to review/revise Feedback	3 hours	Week 5 of Self-Assessment review
Final Feedback	Editor review and Team Lead Sign-off	3-5 hours	Week 6 of Self-Assessment review
Feedback Telecon	Available on request	1 hour	TBD

* Attendance is optional for Returning Examiners who wish only to participate in the Discovery Program.

Examiner Development

Virginia SPQA is working toward the creation of an Examiner development path. The effort involves levels of development for Examiners, defined by maturity, longevity, experience, and performance, which will allow for individuals who are interested to progress through the many roles Examiners fill in the Awards Program, such as Team Leader, Assistant Team Leader, Editor, Mentor, Trainer, Judge, et cetera. This new Path will drive future Examiner Development opportunities, including changes to Examiner training requirements. An optional 360 Evaluation, conducted after consensus and site visits, is part of the Development Path.

NOTE for Returning Examiners

In addition to providing a roadmap for Examiners who desire new and different learning experiences, the effort intends to address the role and types of ongoing education for returning Examiners who wish to continue to add value in the Recognition and Discovery Programs.

Recognizing Examiner Service

Virginia SPQA recognizes the critical importance of Examiners to the success of its Programs. Recognition for Examiners who have fulfilled their obligations includes the following:

- ◆ Certificate of completion of relevant Training courses
- ◆ A complimentary registration to the Virginia Forum for Excellence
- ◆ Recognition Ceremony and Reception the evening before the Virginia Forum for Excellence
- ◆ A Virginia SPQA Pin for first year Examiners
- ◆ A Certificate of Appreciation, signed by the Senators
- ◆ A Letter of Appreciation, signed by the Senators and sent to your employer
- ◆ Name listed on the SPQA website and in the SPQA Newsletter
- ◆ Individual Examiner Press Release
- ◆ Eligibility for awards based on performance and achievement

Virginia SPQA Examiner Code of Ethical Conduct

Members of the U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award for Virginia (Virginia SPQA) Board of Examiners pledge to uphold their professional principles in the fulfillment of their responsibilities as defined in the bylaws that established the Virginia SPQA. In promoting high standards of public service and ethical conduct, individuals serving as Examiners will:

- Conduct themselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, respect, and responsibility to the public
- Avoid representing conflicting or competing interests, or placing themselves in such a position where their interest may be in conflict, or appear to be in conflict, with the purposes and administration of the Award
- Safeguard the confidences of all parties involved in the judging or examination of present or former applicants
- Protect confidential information and avoid disclosures that may in any way influence the Award integrity or process, currently or in the future
- Do not serve any private or special interest in their fulfillment of the duties of an Examiner, therefore excluding by definition the examination of any organization or subunit of an organization that employs them or has a consulting arrangement in effect or anticipated with them
- Do not serve as an Examiner of a primary competitor, customer, or supplier of any organization (or subunit of an organization) that employs them, that they have a financial interest in, or with which they anticipate a consulting arrangement, or are otherwise involved
- Do not intentionally communicate false or misleading information that may compromise the integrity of the Award process or decisions therein
- Make it clear, when establishing links from their own Web sites to the Virginia SPQA Web sites, that users will be taken to the official VIRGINIA SPQA Web site
- Never approach an organization they have evaluated for their personal gain, including the establishment of an employment or consulting relationship, and, if approached by an organization they have evaluated, do not accept employment from that organization for a period of five years after the evaluation
- Maintain and safeguard fairness in the examination process and the confidentiality of all Award application information, including the identity of applicants
- Do not communicate with applicant organizations or in any manner seek additional documentation, information, or clarification. This restriction includes Internet searches.
- Treat as confidential all information about the applicant and the applicant's operation gained through the evaluation process, and take the following precautions:
 - Applicant information is not discussed with anyone, including other Examiners, with the exception of designated team members, Judges, the Award Administrator, and VIRGINIA SPQA representatives. This includes information contained in the written application, as well as any additional information obtained during a site visit.
 - Names of applicants are not disclosed during or after the application review process.
 - No copies of application information are made or retained. (SPQA will notify Examiners when to delete and /or shred materials.)
 - Do not reveal or discuss with other Examiners, either during training or during the application review phases, their participation with an organization in the preparation of an Award application.
- Physically safeguard all information concerning the applicant and their operation by taking the following precautions:
 - Put an unmarked cover page on any paper copies of the application or self-assessment, and/or place in an unmarked file or folder, such that the name is not easily discernable.
 - Keep the application (or self-assessment) and all related materials in a safe/secure location. If in a vehicle, it should be locked in the trunk, or under the seat with the vehicle locked. This includes computers with electronic applications.
 - Close electronic files when unattended.
- Personally and independently score all assigned applications
- Report any violations of the SPQA Code of Ethical Conduct, confidentiality, or COIs to their Team Leader or SPQA Board.
- Upon completion of the Examiner Preparation Course, may use the following designation: Examiner, U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Awards Program for Virginia (VIRGINIA SPQA), and year(s) served. However, the VIRGINIA SPQA logo may not be used in advertising or promotion, or on business cards and this includes the Examiner designation or the VIRGINIA SPQA logo.
- Furthermore, pledge that as a member in good standing of the SPQA Board of Examiners, strive to enhance and advance the Award program as it serves to stimulate organizations in Virginia and the District of Columbia to improve quality, productivity, and overall performance.

