

U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award for Virginia, Maryland and DC

Award Guide 2025



Our Mission

To promote continual improvement strategies and provide training, mentoring, and recognition to organizations in pursuit of performance excellence.





SPQA Key Dates for 2025 Award Program Applicants

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Friday, October 18, 2024	Signed Agreements in Place
Friday, January 10, 2025	Written Application for 2025 Award Cycle Due
January 2025	2025 Examination Cycle Begins
April/May 2025	Applicants' Site Visits Conducted
June 2025	Applicants Notified of Awards
June 2025	Delivery of Applicants' Feedback Reports
July/Aug 2025	Applicants' Feedback Meetings
Fall 2025	SPQA 2025 Recognition Ceremony

Note: This Award Guide is updated annually. You can find updates at:
<https://www.spqa-va.org/award/>

Overview

The mission of the U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award (SPQA) is “...to promote continual improvement strategies and provide training, mentoring, and recognition to organizations in pursuit of performance excellence” in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. We accomplish our mission through a process of knowledge sharing, evaluation, feedback and recognition.

SPQA, a 501-C3 non-profit corporation, administered and supported by an extensive network of organizations, sponsors, and individuals, is committed to helping businesses and organizations of all sizes and in all sectors (business, nonprofit, education, health care, and government). SPQA’s Board of Directors, with the majority comprised of volunteer representatives from public and private sector organizations, administers the program on behalf of Virginia and Maryland’s United States Senators and DC Congress representative who serve as Honorary Chairs.

Why Apply



SPQA promotes awareness of performance excellence as an increasingly important element in competitiveness and organizational sustainability. Participation in the SPQA Award Program is an opportunity to critically examine your organization through self-assessment and receive a rigorous and objective external review of your organization’s performance through the lens of the internationally recognized Baldrige

Excellence Framework to identify strengths and opportunities to improve. Your application effort may serve to accelerate your organizational improvement. Additionally, organizations are eligible to apply for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award if they have earned the top award in their state organization.

Feedback to Applicants

All SPQA Award Applicants receive a Feedback Report, which is created by a team of examiners with expertise across a broad spectrum of areas and industries. The Feedback Report identifies organization-specific strengths and opportunities for improvement. Also, organizations often use the Feedback Report to help create improvement strategies and action plans.

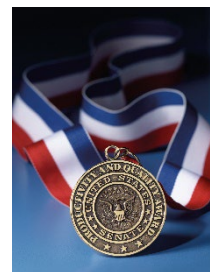
Feedback Reports are distributed in July at the end of the evaluation process. Strict conflict-of-interest and confidentiality procedures are observed in every aspect of application review and feedback and post-review.

After Feedback Reports are delivered, Applicants can arrange to meet with the examiner team to discuss their report and to clarify any questions. These meetings are strongly encouraged.

Levels of SPQA Award

Because the Award is based on individual performance against specific criteria, there is no minimum or maximum number of awards. There are five Award levels of which the Medallion and ACE represent the highest levels of recognition:

- ◆ Commitment to Performance Excellence Award
- ◆ Progress in Performance Excellence Award
- ◆ Achievement in Performance Excellence Award
- ◆ Medallion of Excellence Award
- ◆ Award for Continuing Excellence (ACE)



Applicant Eligibility

Businesses, large and small, and all organizations in the public, private, nonprofit, healthcare, education and government sectors are eligible to apply. SPQA primarily serves organizations located in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Commonwealth of Virginia; however, organizations in other U.S. states or territories may apply. An Applicant can be an entire organization or an organizational unit within a larger parent organization. An organizational unit could be one division of a corporation or one department within a government organization. If an organizational unit applies, it should be a distinct entity that can respond to all the Baldrige Excellence Framework criteria items. Eligibility is intended to be as open as possible to all organizations.

Previous SPQA Medallion recipients are eligible to apply for the ACE no sooner than three years after receiving the Medallion Award. For example, if an organization received the Medallion in 2020 or earlier, it is invited to apply for the ACE in 2024.

Note: For those organizations interested in later applying for a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the National Program has its own eligibility requirements, which can be found on the NIST website at www.nist.gov/baldrige.

Applicant Sectors

Applications are accepted from all industry sectors.

◆ **Manufacturing**

Includes organizations or sub-units that produce and sell manufactured products or manufacturing processes, and producers of agricultural, mining or construction products.

◆ **Service**

Includes organizations or sub-units that provide and sell services. Examples include retail, food, information technology, consulting, insurance, banking and hospitality services.

◆ **Nonprofit**

Includes businesses, professional associations, charitable agencies, social service organizations and other organizations that have been granted federal tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

◆ **Education**

Includes public and private elementary and secondary schools and public-school districts; colleges, universities, and university systems; schools or colleges within universities; professional schools; community colleges; and technical schools. (Note: Departments within schools or colleges are ineligible.)

◆ **Health Care**

Includes hospitals, HMOs, long-term care facilities, health care practitioner offices, home health agencies, dialysis centers, hospice care, etc.

◆ **Government**

Includes federal, state or local government organizations.

Submitting an SPQA Award Application

To be considered for an SPQA Award, organizations must submit a written narrative addressing the criteria items in the Baldrige Excellence Framework. For the 2025 Cycle, SPQA will use the *2023-2024 Baldrige Excellence Framework*, which can be obtained from: <http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/>. Instructions, notes, considerations and recommendations for addressing the Criteria are found in these publications. Organizations intending to apply must complete the following steps.



Step One: Contact us for a Quote

To ensure we are providing you with the correct services each applicant organization will receive a custom quote. Contact us at programs.services@spqa-va.org to start the process.

Step Two: Return the signed Quote by **October 18, 2024**

Unless an exception is granted, the accepted quote must be received by **October 18, 2024**, to be eligible for the **2025 Award Cycle**. This is necessary for SPQA to recruit and train the appropriate number of examiners. SPQA will invoice your organization in accordance with the quote.

Step Three: Prepare an Application

The basis for the application should be organization-wide efforts, processes, and systems, not single projects. The document must effectively describe the organization's efforts to achieve performance excellence. For information on how to write an application, refer to the industry sector specific *2023-2024 Baldrige Excellence Framework (Business, Education, or Health Care)* appropriate for your organization. You can download, or order copies of the Framework and you may also view example applications (award application summaries or case studies) at www.nist.gov/baldrige.

See Appendix 1 for formatting requirements.

Step Four: Submit Application by **January 10, 2025**

To be eligible for the 2025 Award Cycle, applications must be received electronically and by **January 10, 2025**. Email the electronic version to programs.services@spqa-va.org.

SPQA will invoice you for the Application Fee listed in the quote as soon as the electronic Application is received.

SPQA will later invoice you for the Site Visit Fee listed in the quote once site visit eligibility is established. SPQA's policy is to conduct site visits for all Applicants that will benefit from a site visit.

Confirmation of receipt of your Application package will be sent via email to the address of the Applicant point of contact.

Step Five: Evaluation, Notification, & Feedback

A team of well-trained examiners is assigned to evaluate each Application. The Examiner Team works through a rigorous process of individual and consensus review to formulate their feedback. Every applicant has the option of having a Site Visit process to enhance the Examiner's understanding of the organization. The applicant must be willing to host the site visit, generally lasting two days, is part of the examination process. The Examiner Team submits its report to a Panel of Judges, which reviews the reports, determines award levels, and forwards Award determinations to the SPQA Board of Directors. The SPQA Board of Directors certifies that the established evaluation and award recommendation processes were followed. Applicants are notified of their award level soon after the Judges' decision is certified (June/July).

All Applicants receive a comprehensive written "Feedback Report" prepared by the Examiner Team. The report provides valuable insight regarding the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement. After reviewing this report, Applicants are asked to evaluate the report's usefulness. Applicants also are encouraged to arrange a Feedback Meeting with their Examiner Team to discuss the report and clarify any questions.

Expectations of Applicants

To support its mission to promote performance excellence, SPQA has the right to ask any level of Award recipients to publicly share best practices (excluding proprietary information) and lessons learned to help other organizations improve their own performance. Award recipients will be recognized, typically at the annual SPQA Forum for Excellence, and will be invited to present their experience at the Forum. Sharing their experience with others is another way to enhance an Award recipient's organizational learning derived from participating in the SPQA Award process.

Due Diligence

Certification of Good Corporate Citizenship

During the site visit phase, the SPQA Examiner Team Leader will request a private meeting with the most senior organizational leader (or their designee if the most senior leader is unavailable). The purpose of the meeting will be an opportunity for disclosure of any matters affecting the organization that could, if the organization receives public recognition from the SPQA, impact the integrity or perceived integrity of the SPQA Award Program, or the SPQA organization. The leader will be asked questions such as: Have there been any major organizational changes since the submission of the application? Are there any current, pending or anticipated sanctions or restrictions imposed by any regulatory or accrediting body? Is there any current, pending or anticipated unfavorable media exposure about the organization?

General Information

Fees. Fees may be paid via credit card, PayPal, or check made payable to "Virginia SPQA, P.O. Box 2072, Chesapeake, VA 23327-2072". SPQA will provide an invoice for each phase. Fees help defray expenses associated with the Award process and are non-refundable.

◆ Intent to Apply Fee

The intent to apply fee is \$500

◆ Application Fee

The Application fee for all organizations is as follows.

\$5,500 for organizations less than 100 employees

\$7,000 for organizations more than 100 employees

◆ Site Visit Fee

A site visit is typically a part of the evaluation process. There is a flat fee of \$2,500 for the two-day Site Visit. This fee will be invoiced separately from the application fee after site visit eligibility is determined.

Confidentiality. All Applications, commentary and scoring information developed are regarded as proprietary and kept confidential under a strict records retention schedule. Applications are kept confidential for 7 years, commentary and scoring information are kept confidential indefinitely. Applications, commentary and scoring are only available to individuals directly participating in the review of their assigned organization. Information is available only on a need-to-know basis to individuals involved in the review process. All members of the Examiner Team sign non-disclosure agreements, an ethics statement and conflict of interest documents to protect Applicants from unwanted disclosure of proprietary information. After 7 years, SPQA will make a reasonable attempt to contact the organization and confirm the application may be placed in a publicly available library. Organizations who respond to reasonable attempts for contact will be given the opportunity to redact content prior to placing the application in a publicly available library.

Awards Celebration. All Award recipients will be recognized by SPQA during the annual SPQA Forum for Excellence.

Recognition of Recipients. Organizations receiving an Award are eligible for the following:

All Recipients:

- ◆ Press Release announcing accomplishment
- ◆ Recognition and presentation of Award at the SPQA Forum for Excellence.

Medallion and ACE Recipients:

- ◆ Use of SPQA logo (within written guidelines established by SPQA).

SPQA Program Support

There is no guarantee that an Applicant will be recognized at the highest award level. Many Applicants repeat the process several times. The most successful organizations are those that exhibit an ongoing commitment to organizational learning.

Participation in scheduled training events and offering individuals to serve as SPQA examiners are excellent ways to expand knowledge within an organization, while simultaneously supporting the SPQA Program.

SPQA can arrange to conduct focused training at an organization's site. Details of these offerings can be found at <https://www.spqa-va.org/training/>. Please email us at programs.services@spqa-va.org if this is something your organization might consider.

An Alternative – the SPQA Discovery Program

Is your organization just beginning its journey in performance excellence? Perhaps your organization isn't ready to apply for an award but is interested in learning more about the Baldrige Excellence Framework and receiving expert feedback to accelerate its excellence journey and organizational maturity. You should consider the **SPQA Discovery Program**. This non-award program is less intense yet still provides valuable feedback. The Discovery Program accepts participants year around. The Discovery Program Guide can be found at <https://www.spqa-va.org/Discovery/>. For additional information concerning the **Discovery Program**, email programs.services@spqa-va.org.



Appendix 1: Application Format

Content. The basis for the application should be organization-wide efforts, processes, and systems, not single projects. The document must effectively describe the organization's efforts to achieve performance excellence. For information on how to write an application, refer to the industry sector specific **2023-2024 Baldrige Excellence Framework (Business, Education, or Health Care)** appropriate for your organization. You can download, or order copies of the Framework and you may also view example applications (award application summaries or case studies) at www.nist.gov/baldrige.

Format. The application must be submitted digitally with a page size of 8-1/2" by 11". Margins must be 1" for top, bottom, 3/4 inch left and 1/2 inch right. Running text and tables filled mainly with text should be in Times New Roman font (minimum 10-point size). Do not use condensed or compressed fonts. Font type and size need not be uniform but must meet requirements. Content is limited to 55 single line-spaced pages. This includes a maximum 5-page, single-spaced Organizational Profile and 50 pages of Content in response to the seven categories. Pages beyond the 55-page limit will not be used in the application scoring. Pages must be numbered sequentially. Do not number blank pages. A glossary of key terms is encouraged and may be included at the front of the application. Note: The glossary does not count as part of the 55-page limit. The glossary should include short definitions for your organization's terms, acronyms, abbreviations used in the application and may include short descriptions of processes, tools methods and techniques discussed in the application. No other supporting documentation or appendices will be accepted.

Graphics, Charts and Numerical Information. Graphics, charts and numerical information are highly encouraged. All displays of information and data must be labeled with figure/table numbers and titles. Do not use less than 8-point font in data tables, charts, graphs, and other displays of numerical information and data. Clearly label all axes and units of measure. Ensure all displays of information and data are legible, easy to read, and can be interpreted by examiners. The Baldrige Criteria framework offers good examples and guidance on how to construct graphs for the Results section.