



AHCA/NCAL NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD PROGRAM DESCRIPTION OF AWARD LEVELS

The AHCA/NCAL Quality Award has been designed as a progressive three-step program to encourage continuous learning and development of integrated, quality systems to achieve performance excellence. Organizations are able to apply for recognition and awards at three levels, each of which requires a more detailed and comprehensive demonstration of quality integration and performance. The three award levels are based on criteria adopted from the *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) Health Care Criteria for Performance Excellence*.

Step I – At the Step I level, applicants describe their mission, characteristics, and key challenges, which are embodied in the Organizational Profile of the Baldrige criteria. The objective of this step is to provide a context for understanding the organization and its approach to performance improvement. The criteria require that applicants provide a basic description of the organization, their mission/vision and how it is communicated across the organization, their stakeholder and key customer requirements, their supplier and partnering relationships, competitive factors, key performance measures, and their key challenges. Applicants who receive the Step I Award respond to each criterion in a way that demonstrates that they understand the core values and concepts of quality, and that they can see the relationship between their organization’s characteristics, key challenges, and performance measurements, and the ability to achieve performance improvement. Step I Award recipients have not received survey deficiencies at the Substandard Quality of Care or Immediate Jeopardy level for the three years prior to receiving the Award.

Step II – At this level, organizations that have previously received a Step I Award describe the approaches they systematically use and deploy to address important elements of the core values and concepts of the Baldrige criteria. Step II is a critical learning step for applicants. By becoming familiar with core values and concepts of quality, they begin to see the importance of consistency and alignment of organizational processes and results. The objective of this step is to demonstrate that the organization’s leaders are able to learn the principles of performance improvement and apply them to their operating and service delivery systems using the context of the mission, characteristics, and challenges described in the Step I responses. Applicants who receive the Step II Award are able to: (a) describe systematic approaches to demonstrate that they have embraced each of the core values and concepts; (b) describe how key approaches are deployed to levels beyond senior leadership; (c) show significant improvement and/or good levels of performance over time across a balanced set of measures that represent key stakeholder interests; and (d) show that the identified approaches, performance measures, and organizational and process results are linked to the key customer requirements, success factors, and challenges identified in Step I responses. Results do not have to be “best-in-class,” but they must be good or improving as a result of the process improvements. Step II Award recipients have not received survey deficiencies at the Substandard Quality of Care or Immediate Jeopardy level for the three years prior to receiving the Award, and have demonstrated a three-year survey average that is better than their state average.

Step III – At this level, organizations that have previously received the Step II Award address the Baldrige Health Care Criteria for Performance Excellence in their entirety. The objective of this step is to demonstrate superior performance in health care, customer satisfaction, financial, market, workforce, process, and leadership outcomes over time. Responses to the criteria must demonstrate an effective, systematic approach to all of the requirements in each category that is well deployed with evidence of fact-based and systematic evaluation, improvement, learning, and innovation. Each approach should show how it is aligned or integrated with the organization’s needs as described in the Organizational Profile and other process areas. Applicants who receive the Step III Award are able to effectively demonstrate by approach, deployment, and level and consistency of results that they are “best-in-class.” Organizations recommended for an award at this level will receive a site visit by examiners to confirm that what is described in the application is actually being demonstrated in the daily operation of the organization. Step III Award recipients have not received survey deficiencies at the Substandard Quality of Care or Immediate Jeopardy level for the three years prior to receiving the Award, and have demonstrated a three-year survey average that is better than their state average.