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## **ABOUT THE EXAMINER HANDBOOK**

Welcome to the 2022 Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE) Board of Examiners! TNCPE values the time, experience, and expertise you are contributing in order to help the organization achieve its mission to strengthen Tennessee's economic and organizational health, as well as reach our vision of being a trusted partner and regional resource in achieving performance excellence.

This Examiner Handbook provides a summary of the TNCPE Award Program, your role in the TNCPE assessment process, and your responsibilities as an examiner.

Please read this handbook carefully before committing to serve on the Board of Examiners. Keep in mind, this is just an overview. Detailed process instructions will be provided during the orientation and three-day training courses.

# THE TENNESSEE CENTER FOR PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AWARD PROGRAM

## Background

The Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE) was established in 1993. The organization's goal is to drive performance excellence by promoting the understanding and use of the Baldrige Excellence Framework.

The TNCPE Award Program is modeled after the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, established through the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987. For the first 10 years, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was limited to three eligibility categories: service, manufacturing, and small business. Today, there are six eligibility categories, with health care and education added in 1998 and nonprofit organizations (including government) added in 2004.

## Eligibility

The TNCPE Award Program provides opportunities for organizations to measure their progress as they strive to improve performance. The program is open to all types and sizes of organizations in Tennessee and surrounding states and is an effective tool for any organization interested in improving quality, productivity, profits, and competitiveness.

## The Baldrige Excellence Framework™

The Baldrige Excellence Framework describes the characteristics of world-class organizations and is the foundation of the TNCPE Award Program. Updated in 2021, the Baldrige Excellence Framework includes Core Values, the *Criteria for Performance Excellence* (Criteria), and the Scoring Guidelines for award applicants. Organizations apply to the TNCPE Award Program by answering a series of questions in the Criteria which help the organization define and evaluate its systems and processes.

The Baldrige Performance Excellence Program publishes three versions of the Baldrige Excellence Framework: Business, Education, and Health Care.

TNCPE publishes versions of the Business and Health Care Framework books which include information about TNCPE. TNCPE applicants may use any of the current year's framework books offered by TNCPE or the Baldrige program.

## Criteria Categories

The Criteria is divided into eight parts: the Organizational Profile and seven categories. The Organizational Profile asks general questions about the organization and sets the context for how the organization operates. The seven categories, which focus on the basic elements of organizational operations, are:

- Leadership
- Strategy
- Customers
- Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management
- Workforce
- Operations
- Results

Criteria categories are further broken down into items with in-depth questions based on different aspects of each category.

## TNCPE Application Levels

Organizations participating in the TNCPE Award Program may choose to apply at one of four award levels:

- **Interest Level (Level 1)**  
Organizations applying at the Interest Level are assigned a master examiner coach that facilitates two half-day workshops to help the organization conduct a self-assessment and identify next steps based on their strengths and opportunities.
- **Commitment Level (Level 2)**  
Organizations applying at the Commitment Level will submit responses to the basic level questions of the Baldrige Excellence Framework and will receive a one-day site visit by an examiner team. Following receipt of the feedback report, the organization will receive a half-day on site action planning workshop.
- **Achievement Level (Level 3)**  
Organizations applying at the Achievement Level will submit responses to the overall level questions of the Baldrige Excellence Framework and will receive a two-day site visit by an examiner team
- **Excellence Level (Level 4)**  
Organizations applying at the Excellence Level will submit responses to the multiple level questions of the Baldrige Excellence Framework and will receive a three-day site visit by an examiner team.

## Award Recognition

Organizations that apply to the TNCPE Award Program and host a workshop (Level 1) or site visit (Levels 2, 3, and 4) will receive an award recognizing its level of performance, as determined through the TNCPE assessment process.

## TNCPE Award Program Workforce

A crucial component of the TNCPE Award Program is our examiners, judges, and staff. Each of these groups is comprised of individuals with diverse range of experience and expertise who are committed to the goal of performance excellence.

### ***Board of Examiners***

Members of the Board of Examiners commit to volunteer service on an examiner team and are assigned to assess an organization applying to the Award Program. Examiners not only help applicant organizations—they also receive valuable knowledge and skills that they can bring back to their own organization. In addition to training on the Baldrige Excellence Framework, examiners receive professional development in conducting independent analysis, team building and consensus, interview skills, and business writing.

### ***Panel of Judges***

The Panel of Judges, using the work of examiner teams, determines each applicant's level of recognition, and validates the integrity of the assessment process. Judges have served as examiners and team leaders for TNCPE and/or the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program.

### ***Staff***

TNCPE staff members manage day-to-day TNCPE operations. TNCPE staff members are:

**Heather Schoch**, President and CEO

**Kelley Molavi**, Director of Programs

# TNCPE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

## Role of the Board of Examiners

As a member of the Board of Examiners, the duties you perform provide the foundation for the TNCPE Award Program. **The importance of your contributions cannot be overstated.**

Accordingly, much is expected of you. As a member of the Board of Examiners, you agree:

- To serve for one award cycle, which lasts from completion of examiner training until the next year's examiner training begins;
- To attend an online examiner orientation (required for first-year examiners, encouraged for all others) and the full examiner training course, preceded by 10 to 15 hours of pre-work;
- To fulfill your responsibilities as an examiner as you serve on your assigned team;
- To adhere to the Rules of Conduct and Code of Ethical Standards;
- To meet all requirements for a fair and competent assessment, including adherence to the Criteria, the scoring system, consensus, and site visit requirements; and
- To maintain thorough documentation and reasonable records, honor time commitments, and meet deadlines.

## Master Examiners

TNCPE examiners who have distinguished themselves over multiple years of service may earn the designation of master examiner, at the discretion of the TNCPE President. At minimum, they must have completed three years of service on the Board of Examiners, demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the Baldrige Excellence Framework, and served as either a team leader or

scorebook editor. In accepting the master examiner designation, they agree to serve in leadership roles on future TNCPE teams.

## Examiner Training Fees

Training for the Board of Examiners is an intensive, high-quality professional development opportunity. In addition to learning how to assess organizations based on the Baldrige Excellence Framework, examiners develop skills that can be applied at their own organizations, including analysis, consensus- building, team-building, interpersonal relations, written communication, interviewing, and systems thinking.

The following is the fee structure for 2022 examiner training:

- First year examiner - \$495
- Second year examiner - \$295
- Third year and above – no charge

## *The Fine Print*

Examiners who wish to reschedule their training course or withdraw from the examiner program must do so no later than seven (7) days prior to their assigned training course. TNCPE is not able to offer any refund of training fees within seven (7) days of the examiner's assigned training course.

TNCPE will refund training fees, minus a \$100 late cancellation fee, for first and second year examiners who withdraw from the program up until seven (7) days before their assigned training class. Examiners returning for their third year or more will be assessed a late cancellation fee of \$100 for withdrawing from examiner training within seven (7) days of their assigned training class.

After completing examiner training, an examiner who fails to complete all stages of the assessment process with their assigned team may be invoiced the full training

fee of \$695. Previously paid training fees will be credited on the invoice.

## 2022 Award Cycle

### Examiner Orientation

TNCPE will conduct a required online orientation for new examiners in May. Participation in the online orientation is encouraged as refresher for returning examiners.

### Examiner Training

TNCPE will be conducting examiner training in June and July. Training will be 3-day with a selection between virtual or in-person training. Every examiner candidate must complete a full course series. Master Examiners will be required to attend day 3 of the training session.

### Assessment Schedule

The following is an approximate schedule for the application assessment stages. Exact dates will be determined by your team leader.

#### Independent Review & Scoring – Stage 1

August/September

#### Consensus Review & Meeting – Stage 2

September/October

#### Site Visit Schedule – Stage 3

October

#### Final Scorebooks Due – Stage 4

No later than two weeks after site visit

### Other Dates

- The TNCPE Panel of Judges convenes in mid-November.
- Feedback report distribution begins after the Panel of Judges convenes.

## Time Commitments

It is critical that examiners honor their commitment to TNCPE by making their examiner duties a high priority. Your teammates will rely on you to adhere to agreed-upon due dates.

**Depending on the level of the application assigned, an examiner should expect to spend between 60 to 100 hours on their application, including the time spent on the site visit.**

## Reimbursement of Expenses

Examiners whose application assignments require overnight travel to site visit may request reimbursement from TNCPE, if their employers will not cover the expense.

Reimbursement will be provided upon submission of receipts and the Reimbursement Request Form, which may be found on the Examiner Resources Page.

Expenses are reimbursed for site visit days only— not for training or consensus meetings.

### Site Visit Reimbursement Maximum Amounts by Application Level

Level	Length	Maximum
2	2 days	\$350
3	3 days	\$525
4	4 days	\$700

Please note, the site visit length described here includes the required full day wrap-meeting immediately following the site visit to document your site visit findings.

## Security and Confidentiality Considerations

Examiners should use appropriate precautions and safeguards to ensure the confidentiality of the applicant during the assessment.

- Hard copies of the Award application, as well as any documentation generated by TNCPE or the examiner that relates to the assessment, should be stored in a secure location, such as a locked file or file cabinet.
- Award application materials and relevant documentation being reviewed or stored on personal computers should be secured from viewing by users other than the examiner.
- When not in use, examiners are to remain logged off of the Scorebook Navigator software.
- Examiners are not permitted to have someone else review or transcribe written documents relating to the TNCPE Award application assessment, even if the other person is an examiner.
- The applicant's name should be referenced in the examiner's documentation materials (i.e., Scorebook Navigator, site visit issue worksheets); however, team email communications should use "the applicant" or the applicant number assigned by TNCPE.
- When the review process is complete and the final feedback report has been delivered to the applicant, the TNCPE office will send a message to examiners asking them to destroy or delete all application-related materials, including papers, electronic documents, and back-up files. A best practice is to keep all materials in a designated folder for easy deletion.

## Scorebook Navigator™ Software

Examiners assigned to evaluate Level 2, 3, and 4 applications will use the Scorebook Navigator software platform to complete independent review, consensus review, and prepare final scorebooks

The Scorebook Navigator software can be accessed by visiting: <https://www.scorebooknav.org>

Each examiner will receive from the TNCPE office a username and ID for initial access to the software. Upon first use of the software, the examiner is required to change his/her password to ensure security.

Usernames and passwords will be deactivated by the TNCPE office at the conclusion of the review process.

# ASSESSMENT PROCESS OVERVIEW

The following is an overview of the assessment process for Level 2, 3, and 4 applicants. Level 1 applicants follow a separate process that is facilitated by a trained master examiner coach.

Throughout the process, TNCPE will host a series of webinars to support examiners at the different stages of the assessment. Examiners are strongly encouraged to participate in these webinars.

## Independent Review (Stage 1)

During this stage, examiners review an assigned application, independent of their examiner team members, and compare the applicant's responses to the Criteria questions. Examiners will note potential strengths and opportunities for improvement (OFIs) and score the applicant's responses according to the guidelines.

During the independent review, the application forms and written application are the only sources of information that the examiners are permitted to use. Independent reviews will be shared among team members only after every team member's independent review has been completed.

## Consensus (Stage 2)

The purpose of consensus is to clarify and resolve differences in individual examiners' observations and scoring during independent review. The team leader will assign each team member the responsibility of preparing one or more items for the consensus meeting. During the consensus meeting, the team will determine the key strengths and OFIs for which the team intends to seek additional information during the applicant site visit. Examiners will prepare site visit issue

worksheets for each of the topics to be discussed during the site visit.

## Site Visit (Stage 3)

Examiner teams will spend time at the applicant's facilities to better understand the organization by verifying the information presented by the applicant and clarifying uncertain points in the application.

At the end of the site visit, examiner teams may not take any materials or documentation from the organization--this includes copies or pictures of any materials or documents. Furthermore, teams may not request or accept any additional information from the applicant after leaving the site visit.

### *Use of Electronic Devices During Site Visit*

#### **Computer Use**

Examiners may use personal laptop computers to take notes during site visit documentation reviews and during interviews, if approved by the applicant. However, it is critical to maintain the confidentiality of work in progress (such as consensus comments, site visit issue worksheets, and interview notes) at all times while on site.

Examiners may not use the applicant's computers to take notes, login to Scorebook Navigator, or otherwise access their documentation related to the applicant.

#### **Cell Phone Use**

If the applicant's policy prohibits the use of cell phones in its facility, then do not take your cell phone on site. If, however, the applicant allows cell phones on site, they should be kept on silent and examiners should refrain from texting or taking calls while in meetings or interviews. Limit cell phone use to approved breaks that have been scheduled by your team leader.

## **Final Scorebook Preparation (Stage 4)**

Upon completion of the site visit, the team will document their site visit findings and scorebook comments, which ultimately becomes the applicant's feedback report. This report is the key deliverable of the assessment process because it provides the applicant a pathway for continuous improvement.

## **Panel of Judges Review**

Prior to meeting, the judges have reviewed the scorebooks and site visit findings of all Level 2, 3, and 4 applicants. During the Panel of Judges meeting, each application and feedback report is discussed and, if necessary, the team leader is contacted with questions.

The judges reach consensus on the Award recognition level for each applicant. After discussion of all applicants is complete, judges review the applicants at each Award level to verify the integrity of the process.

## **Award Presentation**

Applicants' awards are presented at the annual Excellence Celebration, held in conjunction with the Excellence Conference in late February or early March. As a member of the Board of Examiners, you will be invited to attend the Excellence Celebration, at no charge. as a guest of TNCPE.

To preserve the confidentiality of our applicants, we ask that examiners do not speak with their assigned applicant at the Celebration unless the applicant initiates the conversation.

## **RULES OF CONDUCT AND ETHICAL STANDARDS**

The following Rules of Conduct are established to maintain the confidentiality of TNCPE Award Program application information, including the identity of applicants. In addition, these rules preserve fairness in the examination process. The rules pertain to the entire Board of Examiners, including the Panel of Judges.

Examiners must agree to a standard code of conduct and non-disclosure, and

- will conduct themselves professionally, guided by truth, accuracy, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all their interactions;
- will maintain and safeguard fairness in the examination process and the confidentiality of all Award application information, including the identity of applicants;
- will treat as confidential all information about the applicant and the applicant's operation gained through the assessment process;
- will encourage and maintain a professional working environment that promotes respect for the Award applicants, their employees, and all members of the examiner team;
- will respect the climate, culture, and values of the organization being evaluated;
- will not intentionally communicate false or misleading information that may compromise the integrity of the Award process, or decisions therein;
- will not at any time, during or after the assessment cycle, independently give feedback to applicants regarding scoring or overall performance;
- for a period of three (3) years after the assessment, will not 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 assessed, will not accept employment or consulting arrangement from that organization for a period of three (3) years after the assessment.

### ***Code of Ethical Standards – Declaration of Principles***

Members of the TNCPE Board of Examiners pledge to uphold their professional principles in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

- In promoting high standards of public service and ethical conduct, examiners: will 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 TNCPE Award Program;
- will not review an organization with which they or their family members have an employment relationship;
- will not serve as examiners of a primary competitor or 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;
- will not review an organization that represents more than 5% of their investments; and
- may review an organization they have previously reviewed only after three (3) years.

### ***Disclosure of Conflict of Interest***

Those selected to serve on the Board of Examiners must sign and agree to adhere to TNCPE's Conflict of Interest and Non-Disclosure Agreement immediately upon receiving their application assignment. The Conflict of Interest takes into account employers, significant ownership, client relationships, and affiliations that may present, or seem to present, a conflict of interest to the examiner's ability to impartially fulfill his/her TNCPE duties. Such information will be kept confidential.