



WASHINGTON STATE QUALITY INITIATIVES

HISTORY OF WSQA

The State Legislature officially established the Washington State Quality Award (WSQA) in 1994 with Senate Bill 6220. The volunteers who worked to create WSQA represented top business, government, and labor unions in the state.

Funded initially through donations from private industry, WSQA was established as a 501.3(c) non-profit organization dedicated to providing education and training on the Baldrige model of performance excellence. The state government provided an administrative program manager, housed in the Secretary of State's Office of Corporations.

The original authorizing legislation required the governor to chair the Council and appoint approximately 20 people to the Council from business, education, and labor and representing the Eastern and Western parts of the state. After several years, the legislation was changed to require the governor appoint only one person and to eliminate state funding for the administrative program manager. At this point, the internal organizational structure was redesigned to incorporate a Board of Directors and a Panel of Judges. The Panel of Judges is represented with one member serving on the Board. Donations and conference revenues funded the hiring of a part-time contract employee and rent for a small office in Olympia.

In 2005, House Bill 1970 was passed requiring all state agencies, boards, commissions and institutions of higher education to apply for the WSQA or equivalent by 2008. In 2007 Senate Bill 5959 passed requiring all eligible organizations receiving over \$500,000 for transitional housing operations and rent programs to apply to WSQA by 2011.

In 2010, more legislation was passed and became law—RCW 43.185C.210(5). This legislation targeted the transitional housing operating and rent program (THOR), created to assist individuals and families who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless to secure and retain safe, decent, and affordable housing. Paragraph (5) states:

(5) Beginning in 2011, each eligible organization receiving over five hundred thousand dollars during the previous calendar year from the transitional housing operating and rent program and from sources including: (a) State housing-related funding sources; (b) the affordable housing for all surcharge in RCW [.22.178](#); (c) the home security fund surcharges in RCW [.22.179](#) and [.22.1791](#); and (d) any other surcharge imposed under chapter [.22](#) or [.185C](#) RCW to fund homelessness programs or other housing programs, shall apply to the Washington state quality award program for an independent assessment of its quality management, accountability, and performance system, once every three years.

The Washington State Quality Award is awarded to organizations that have implemented and achieved exceptional quality performance. These organizations are seen as models for organizations throughout Washington and the nation who seek the same results.

For more information about the WSQA, please visit their website at: [://www.wsqa.net](http://www.wsqa.net).

WSQA ASSESSMENT AND AWARD

Lite Assessment Application. This is a starting point for organizations that are beginning to adopt and apply quality principles as defined by the WSQA and Baldrige Criteria. The Lite Assessment contains a subset of the full Criteria. In general, the organization completes an organizational Profile, Description, and Challenges section. Approximately three months after this information is sent to WSQA, the organization receives a written feedback report, and is offered an Executive Briefing by the examination panel.

Full Examination Application. The full exam occurs on an annual cycle, and the full Baldrige criteria are used in the assessment. It includes a site visit by an examination panel. The organization receives a full feedback report, an executive briefing, with key themes. There are four levels of WSQA that can be awarded—Commitment (beginning level), Achievement (intermediate level), Leadership (advanced level), and Excellence (highest level of demonstrated excellence).

CSBG SUPPORTS COMMUNITY ACTION & WSQA

The Washington State CSBG Office supports quality through a Baldrige-based systems approach of self-assessment. A report by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (U S Dept of Commerce, NIST: 2001, Link and Scott) estimated that the net private benefits associated with the Baldrige National Quality Program at \$24.65 billion, as compared to the cost of the program of \$119 million, a benefit-to-cost ratio of 207 to 1. In 2005, Congress added the nonprofit sector to those eligible entities for the Baldrige award program.

In the fall of 2010, three regional all-day WSQA trainings were held for community action agencies, in partnership with the Washington State Community Action Partnership (WSCAP). This training was designed to familiarize the CAAs with the WSQA, and gave an overview of the process for applying for an assessment and/or award. At the same time, the state CSBG office purchased WSQA materials that will be used in 2011 for a series of webinars. These webinars will help the CAAs move along in the assessment process, based on individual needs. The CSBG office also purchased the Lite Assessment fees for those CAAs who indicated they were ready to apply, or who would be ready within twelve months. Of the 30 CAAs in Washington State, two are currently applying for an assessment within the month, and five more feel they will be ready to apply within twelve months.

To ensure that CSBG discretionary funds will be available, the use of these funds to support WSQA activities has been included in the 2011-12 CSBG State Plan. It is our hope that all 30 CAAs will decide to engage in this self-assessment process, either through WSQA, through the Community Action Partnership's "Investment in Excellence" program, or other similar program.