Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award

In 2010, Freese and Nichols (FNI) was named a recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The Baldrige award is the highest presidential honor given to U.S. organizations for performance excellence, and FNI is the first engineering/architecture firm to receive this honor. Continuous improvement processes implemented during our Baldrige journey enabled FNI to weather the nation’s financial downturn, expand business into the energy sector, and open a new office in North Carolina.

Organizations Receiving the Baldrige Award
The Baldrige Program received 1,579 applications from 1989 to 2012, with 99 organizations named recipients of the Award.

Innovative approaches
Practical results
Outstanding service

.created by Congress in 1987, the Baldrige Program exists to help organizations achieve world-class performance. The Baldrige Program is the first and only presidential award program dedicated to improving U.S. organizations. The Program is administered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive. To receive the award, an organization must have a role-model management system that ensures continuous improvement in the delivery of products and services, demonstrates efficient and effective operations, and provides a way of engaging and responding to customers and employees.

Organizations apply for the award by responding to the questions in the Baldrige Criteria that provide a framework that any organization can use to improve overall performance. The seven categories are: Leadership; Strategic Planning; Customer Focus; Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management; Workforce Focus; Process Management; and Results.
Our Continuous Improvement Journey

While project excellence and technical quality have always been a hallmark of FNI, our leadership sought to elevate our management system to the same level. In 1995 we adopted the Continuous Improvement (CI) form of management. CI is an ongoing effort to improve our processes and services. The CI system focuses on process improvement and empowers employees working most closely with the processes to suggest and implement improvements.

State and National Awards

In 2007, FNI received the Texas Award for Performance Excellence, the first engineering/architecture firm to do so. The award, a statewide version of the Baldrige award, is given by the Quality Texas Foundation and assesses performance in seven categories of management systems.

Acting on the feedback received from the Texas Performance Excellence award, our firm continued to make the process improvements that took our quality performance to the Baldrige level.

IMPACT

FNI’s quality initiatives have raised our level of performance and service to each of our stakeholder groups: our clients, employees, communities and colleagues. Some of the impacts on our clients include:

- Voice of the Client Program helps us understand clients’ needs and make improvements based on client input
- Quality Assurance/Quality Control Program is continuously reviewed and improved to provide quality work
- Seminars and FN University training offered to client staff
- Long-tenured and motivated workforce providing consistency to client projects
- Greater opportunities for project innovation through FNI’s innovation programs
- Project savings through process efficiencies
- Improved client communications

MOVING FORWARD

- FNI remains focused on our Continuous Improvement (CI) journey. After review of the 2010 Baldrige Feedback Report, we created our Baldrige (CI) Vision 2016 to keep moving forward. We are also monitoring the biannual changes to Baldrige criteria for areas to address to remain competitive.
- FNI served as a mentor to the City of Irving through their Baldrige journey; the City was named a recipient of the 2011 Texas Award for Performance Excellence (TAPE) and 2012 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. FNI helped review Irving’s initial application for TAPE, helped them practice for site visits and provided other guidance during the process. As Baldrige recipients, our relationship continues in a mutual sharing of best practices.
- FNI provides a broad group of clients with Baldrige outreach, including the City of Fort Worth, City of Tyler, Town of Prosper, and the Fort Worth, Weatherford, Keller and Hurst-Euless-Bedford independent school districts. We are meeting with various clients on an ongoing basis to identify opportunities for assistance in their pursuit of performance excellence.
- Since 2010, FNI leaders have given more than 40 presentations on a variety of performance excellence/Baldrige-related topics at national, state and regional quality conferences; industry conferences; universities; and client workshops. Please send your speaking and/or information requests to: baldrigeinfo@freese.com.
- Our journey continues. We are preparing to resubmit for the 2016 Baldrige Award.