



CAPE Explorer Recognition Application Instructions

Administered by California Council for Excellence

Explorer Recognition Overview

The Explorer Recognition is for organizations that have the desire to apply for the Eureka Award but want to focus on one or up to three Baldrige categories and associated results at a time. Your organization can choose to apply for Explorer Recognition for the following categories of the [Baldrige Excellence Framework](#):

1. Leadership
2. Strategy
3. Customers
4. Measurement, Analysis, Review, and Knowledge Management
5. Workforce
6. Operations

What is the CAPE Explorer Recognition?

The Explorer Recognition provides organizations with more of a choice in how to apply and receive valuable feedback from Examiners. Instead of responding to the full Baldrige Criteria (which includes 7 Categories, 17 Items, and almost 300 questions), the Explorer Recognition process allows organizations to select specific Baldrige categories and related results to respond to. It provides the opportunity for organizations to take a less comprehensive approach for those not quite ready to take on the traditional 50-page Baldrige application.

How do you select a Category?

This decision is going to be different for every organization. You may be interested in receiving feedback in a work area that has experienced challenges or you may be seeking reinforcement of best practices you believe your organization has implemented from the perspective of professionals from outside of your organization or industry.

Who can apply for an Explorer Recognition?

Any organization may apply for the Explorer Recognition. There are three versions of the Baldrige Excellence Framework (Health Care, Education, and Business/Non-profit), so it is important that your application responds to the Criteria that are most relative to your organization. The Baldrige Excellence Framework can be [purchased here](#).

What are the benefits of applying?

Explorer Recognition applications are reviewed by two experienced CAPE Examiners. Once the Examiners have completed their review, the applicant will receive a Feedback Report identifying the Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement identified in relation to the Category. The Feedback Report is non-prescriptive and is based on the Criteria and responses provided in the application your organization completes. Feedback reports are often used by organizations as part of a strategic planning process as an input in environmental scans, they are also used as a source to drive process improvement within organizations.

Once you have received your Explorer Feedback Report, your organization will have an opportunity to participate in an Executive Briefing to engage with one or both Examiners who reviewed your application. This conversation will allow your organization to candidly discuss the findings in the Feedback Report.

In addition to the Feedback Report and Executive Briefing (optional), Explorer Recognition recipients also receive a trophy bearing the CAPE logo. This trophy is presented to the recipient at CCE's Annual Best Practices and Awards Conference.

Is the identity of applicants and the information submitted made public?

The identity of all applicants remains confidential until the examination cycle is complete, and the applicant is announced as an Explorer Recognition recipient. All information submitted by applicants is also treated as confidential. All Examiners are required to follow confidentiality procedures when handling applicant information. However, please note that they may transfer information via email, mail, web-based software, and telephone when confidentiality procedures are followed.

How do organizations apply?

Once an organization has decided which Category area(s) they will apply for, the application process consists of (1) completing and submitting an Intent to Apply form and fee, and (2) preparing and completing an Explorer Recognition application, including a completed Application Form, a 5-page Organizational Profile and a 10-page Category Criteria response, including the associated results.



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Award Application Submission:

Applicants must submit the final application in PDF format to the California Council for Excellence by the cycle deadline (see below).

Application Cycles:

CCE offers three assessment cycles for Explorer Recognition. The assessment cycle is as follows:

| | Cycle 1: Spring/ Summer | Cycle 2: Summer/ Fall | Cycle 3: Fall/ Winter |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Intent to Apply Due | February 1 | May 1 | August 1 |
| Application Due | April 1 | July 1 | October 1 |
| Examination Team Review | April-May | July-August | October-November |
| Feedback Report Sent to Applicant | June | September | December |
| Executive Briefing (optional) | July/ August | October/ November | January/ February |

Fees:

CCE offers a discounted application fee for organizations that apply for multiple Explorer Recognition criteria categories. Organizations are only able to apply for a maximum of three categories at a time. The 2024 fee schedule is as follows:

- **Intent to Apply:** \$500 (non-refundable)
- **One Category:** \$3,600
- **Two Categories:** \$4,200
- **Three Categories:** \$4,800

Upon receipt of the Intent to Apply, California Council for Excellence will send an invoice for the application fee which can be paid by credit card, ACH, or check. The application fee must be received by the application due date.

Explorer Recognition Application Instructions

The purpose of this section is to provide applicants with instructions for preparing the Explorer Recognition application. These instructions describe content, format, assembly, and submission requirements.

Objective

The objective of the CAPE Explorer Recognition application is for the applicant to provide sufficient information to enable the Examination team to conduct a rigorous evaluation. All information provided in the application is considered and treated as confidential.

Content

In your application, include information on all your organization's units and subunits, as appropriate. Do not include links to websites. Examiners base their evaluations solely on information within your application. Your award application must contain the items listed in the order given below:

1. **Blank front cover.** To help ensure confidentiality, do not include text or illustrations.
2. **Title page.** Give the name of your organization. You may also include the address and logo, illustrations, the date, a statement indicating that this is an application for the CAPE Explorer Recognition, and/or a statement regarding the confidentiality of the content. Do not include additional information, text, or links to websites.
3. **Divider pages.** Use divider pages to separate the sections listed below. On each, include only the section title. If you include additional text or illustrations, the pages will count toward the 10-page limit for the responses addressing Category Items. Dividers should include:
 - Table of Contents
 - Application Form
 - Organization Chart(s)
 - Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations
 - Organizational Profile (5 pages or less)
 - Responses Addressing [Selected] Category Items (10-page limit per category/related results)



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4. Table of Contents. Indicate the page numbers for:

- Application Form
- Organization Chart(s)
- Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations
- Organizational Profile (5 pages or less)
- Responses Addressing [Selected] Category Items

5. Application form. The completed form must be signed by the highest-ranking official, indicating that the applicant agrees to the terms and conditions of the Explorer Recognition process. You can download the Application form here:

<https://www.calexcellence.org/awardprogram>.

6. Organization chart(s). Applicant should provide organization chart(s) with sufficient detail for Examiners to understand the relationships among the applicant’s subunits.

7. Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations. In the glossary, include only terms and abbreviations used in your application, with very brief definitions. Do not include descriptions of processes, tools, methods, or techniques in the glossary, or your application will be returned.

- An acceptable example of a glossary entry is:
 - **SPP**: strategic planning process
- The following example is not acceptable because it indicates a description:
 - **SPP**: strategic planning process, which has nine steps: a review of key documents, such as the research contract with the USDA; a two-day retreat; a review of funding and mandates; a review of current organizational performance; a review of an environmental scan; appreciative inquiry; brainstorming; allocation of resources; and creation of action plans.

8. Organizational Profile. This up-to-5-page section outlines your organization and states the key factors that influence its operations and future directions. Examiners use this vital part of your application throughout their review. For guidelines on preparing this section, see the appropriate [Baldrige Excellence Framework](#) booklet.

9. Responses Addressing [Selected] Category Items:

| Category | Process Items | Results Item(s) |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Leadership | Items 1.1 & 1.2 | Item 7.4 |
| 2. Strategy | Items 2.1 & 2.2 | Item 7.5b |
| 3. Customers | Items 3.1 & 3.2 | Item 7.2 |
| 4. Measurement, Analysis, Review, and Knowledge Management | Items 4.1 & 4.2 | TBD (contact CCE) |
| 5. Workforce | Items 5.1 & 5.2 | Item 7.3 |
| 6. Operations | Items 6.1 & 6.2 | Item 7.1 |

10. Electronic Application Assembly:

- Create **one** PDF file that contains the following items:
 - Completed Application Form
 - Organization Chart(s)
 - Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations
 - Organizational Profile
 - Criteria Response
- Proof the PDF file to verify the contents and number of pages.
- Submit your application in PDF format to the California Council for Excellence at hello@calexcellence.org.

Page and Text Format

| Element | Requirement |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Page Size | Standard, 8½-by-11-inch white |
| Page Orientation | Text Pages: Portrait Pages with graphs, figures, and data tables: Portrait or Landscape |
| Margins | Left - 3/4 inch minimum Right - 1/2 inch minimum |
| Text columns | 2 (preferred) Leave at least ¼ inch between columns. |
| Numbering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational Profile: Use roman numerals (five page maximum) • Responses Addressing Criteria Items: For example, label 1–10 (10 page maximum per category/related results; applicants may present fewer pages) • Figures within the Organizational Profile and Items Sections: Number in sequence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use numbers corresponding to the section (e.g., Figure P.1-1, Figure P.1-2, Figure 2.1-1, Figure 2.1-2). • Do not number blank pages or divider pages. |
| Font Size | Use a standard font (Times New Roman or Arial recommended), 10 point minimum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use narrow, compressed, or condensed fonts. • Smaller type sizes make it difficult for examiners to interpret the data and to provide accurate and actionable feedback. |
| Tables filled mainly with text | Use a standard font (Times New Roman or Arial recommended), 8 points minimum |
| Graphics | Standard font, 8 points minimum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may include charts, graphs, data tables, and other figures. • If you shrink graphics to fit the space available, ensure that text in the reduced figure meets the requirements. • Clearly label each figure using descriptive text. For example, the title of the third figure for item 7.1 might read “Figure 7.1-3: Reliability of Service: Carrier-Dropped Calls.” • Clearly label all axes and units of measure. • For information on using graphics in category 7 (Results), see “Responding to Results Items” in the <i>Baldrige Excellence Framework</i> booklet that is appropriate for your organization’s sector. |