
**SOUTH CAROLINA FORESTRY COMMISSION
MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD CRITERIA
TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT**

TEAM CHARGE

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria was adapted by the South Carolina Budget and Control Board for all state agencies to use for self-evaluation of their management processes. Two of the goals of this effort were to provide a framework for agencies to analyze their management practices and to assist agencies in the preparation of their annual accountability reports.

The Budget and Control Board created the *South Carolina Organizational Self-Assessment for State Government Agencies*. This self-assessment process allows each agency to respond to a series of questions designed to evaluate their operations and use this information to identify opportunities for organizational improvements.

Consistent with other state agencies, the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) endeavors to improve organizational operations in support of the agency mission. Processes associated with planning, evaluation and professional development within the agency will be improved through the development and implementation of a plan that integrates the Baldrige Award Criteria principles.

To that end, Senior Management of the SCFC appointed 4 teams of agency employees to conduct the agency follow-up self-assessment in July 2002. One team was formed from each region and another team was formed of Columbia office staff. Mr. Nathan Strong and Dr. Hardy Merritt of the Budget and Control Board's Office of Human Resources served as consultant facilitators. The teams were comprised of the following members:

Coastal Region Team

Melfi, Frances (Team Leader)	Dorchester/Charleston Project Forester
Hardee, Cheryl	Coastal Region Administrative Assistant
Hughey, Stephen	Coastal Region Mechanic
Maine, Moses	Beaufort County Forestry Warden I
Smith, Terrell	Hampton County Ranger
Sprouse, Judy	Coastal Regional Secretary
Stuckey, Pete	Hampton Area Forester

Columbia Team

Patton, Tom (Team Leader)	Forester-Recreation Coordinator
Hubright, Russell	Asst. Environmental Education Coordinator
Lucas, Judy	Internal Auditor
Mason, Lisa	Administrative Specialist
Rogers, Cathy	Administrative Specialist
Tavera, Stephanie	Applications Analyst
Woodham, Leslie	Safety Director

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Pee Dee Region Team

Amerson, Jackie (Team Leader)	Pee Dee Region Administrative Assistant
Capps, Jimmy	Georgetown County Forest Technician
Cherinko, Judy	Kingstree Area Secretary
Hunsucker, Forrest	Dillon/Marlboro County Ranger
Leclair, Lynn	Darlington Area Forester
McLeod, Mac	Kershaw County Forestry Warden III
Mitchell, Lloyd	Pee Dee Region Dispatch Manager

Piedmont Region Team

Still, Chuck (Team Leader)	Edgefield County Project Forester
Babb, Cathey	Greenwood Area Secretary
Brucke, Jarrod	Oconee County Ranger
Chappell, Mandy	Piedmont Region Equipment Maint. Secretary
Counts, George	Newberry County Forestry Warden I
Hall, Linda	Piedmont Region Dispatcher
Tobias, Jimmy	Piedmont Region Pilot

The Team was charged with conducting a self-assessment of agency operations, using the criteria for the Baldrige Award, to determine the organizational strengths and to identify areas for improvement (opportunities). The teams began meeting in early July. The team leaders from the four teams concluded the process by meeting on July 30, 2002 to reconcile the team reports and prioritize the team's findings.

TEAM ANALYSIS SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The purposes of the Baldrige Criteria are:

- To help improve organizational performance practices and capabilities;
- To facilitate sharing and communication of best practices information; and
- To serve as a working tool for understanding and managing performance, and guiding planning and training.

The Award Criteria are built on a core set of values and concepts, which represent the underlying basis for integrating customer and organizational performance requirements. These are:

- Customer driven quality;
- Leadership;
- Continuous improvement;
- Employee participation and development;
- Fast response;
- Long range outlook;
- Management by fact; and
- Partnership development.

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The Baldrige Criteria Goals are designed to support dual, results-oriented goals:

- Delivery of ever-improving value to customers resulting in organizational success, and
- Improvement of overall organizational effectiveness and capabilities.

The first meeting for each team began with a review of the specific Baldrige criteria on the agenda. There are seven categories:

- Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Customer Focus
- Information and Analysis
- Human Resource Management and Development
- Process Management
- Business Results

The remainder of the meetings focused on identifying SCFC's specific strengths and opportunities related to each Baldrige category.

After completing the identification of strengths and opportunities in all Baldrige categories, opportunities were compiled into one list. A total of 88 opportunities were identified. Numerous strengths were identified as well. Items identified as strengths were not considered in the prioritization process of opportunities for improvement. Strengths are areas in which the agency is proficient and may continue to benefit from emphasizing. However, our charge was to prioritize the opportunities. In the final session, the team leaders prioritized the opportunities based upon input from their individual teams.

The priority list was then reviewed, recurrent themes were identified, and the list was reduced to the top 20 priority opportunities. The draft of the report was sent to the team leaders for distribution to their teams for final review on July 31, 2002. Team leaders met on August 8, 2002 to finalize the report. The final report being presented to the Senior Management on August 12, 2002.

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TEAM PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following items were identified by the team as priority opportunities for improvement and are recommended for action. They are not listed in order of priority but as they appear in the Baldrige categories.

LEADERSHIP

- **Senior management has not effectively communicated a long-term vision for SCFC in light of new fiscal realities. Agency has not articulated a vision statement.**
- **Senior management has not done a good job of using quality teams in all cases. Some have had recommendations disregarded. EX: The fitness committee's recommendations were disregarded and a lawyer's suggestions were adopted instead.**
- **On an ongoing basis, there is no method for communications upward in the organization. Agency should attempt to get more input from employees on issues that affect how their jobs are performed.**
- **Senior leadership has not created a system for promoting self-esteem by recognition and rewarding performance.**

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- **There is no overall human resource plan for tomorrow, much less 2-5 years out. Agency's human resources plan needs to be more fully developed and aligned with the strategic plan (pay, some training, succession planning, career path development).**
- **Need to develop short-term goals and action plans supporting strategic goals and communicate implementation efforts throughout the agency.**

CUSTOMER FOCUS

- **SCFC has not systematically communicated key customer requirements to employees. EX: After forest management plan survey was completed, agency did not send it out to other employees for input or suggestions for improvement.**

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

- **SCFC needs to study the reliability of the paging system used by the agency.**
- **Eliminate redundancy in information collection and dissemination. Many data systems in the agency are not integrated and require redundant data entry. EX: Law enforcement incident report and incident checklist report; A-1 and timesheets; and equipment inspection report and fuel report are kept on separate systems. Technology should be used to eliminate redundant data requirements.**

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- **Performance measures do not exist for all parts of the agency. SCFC does not regularly use benchmark (comparative) data to analyze performance against other similar organizations.**

HUMAN RESOURCES

- **SCFC does not have a systematic approach to reward and recognize employees for their achievements and contributions.**
- **SCFC has not engaged in meaningful workforce and succession planning for the future. No process is in place to ensure that the agency will have the appropriate people, with the appropriate skills in place to meet future needs.**
- **Approach used by SCFC to implement the fitness standards has alienated many long-term employees. There is no comprehensive wellness program other than the physical fitness program. A program should include the opportunity to provide education about physical fitness and proper nutrition. Incentives should be offered to encourage employees to participate.**
- **Agency does not monitor and track employees' satisfaction trends over time.**
- **There should be flex time and cross-training throughout the agency used consistently.**
- **SCFC has no formal employee orientation program.**

PROCESS MANAGEMENT

- **Critical agency work processes are not documented. Key processes are not flow charted and many policies and procedures are difficult to locate in the manual.**
- **Data management processes need to be integrated across the agency.**

BUSINESS RESULTS

- **Employee input should be solicited and used to improve human resources programs. Training; compensation; recognition; flexible work hours; safety and security.**
- **The agency should analyze trends of internal and external customer satisfaction data and compare the data to other similar organizations.**

The above listed priorities received general consensus as the most pressing needs of the agency to be identified in this year's strategic plan. We also recommend that the following pages of strengths and opportunities be considered and incorporated into the Agency's strategic plan. Some recommendations/observations may appear redundant but were identified under separate categories. To better assist in the reading process we have included the category headings.

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1.0 LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

- Leadership found a way to take budget cuts without laying off employees.
- Leadership has created a strategic plan with specific goals and updated the plan in 2001.
- SCFC has a values statement.
- Management reviews both financial and some customer satisfaction performance data regularly.
- Agency has experienced some success using quality improvement teams on non-controversial topics. EX: Won awards for records retention team's efforts.
- Agency involved in wide array of community outreach activities such as Smokey program, Wood Magic, Project Learning Tree, Arbor Day, and participation in fairs, Wildlife Expo, job shadowing, schools and local government to promote good forestry practices, give seedlings to non-profits.
- Senior management reviews performance data related to fire activity, forest exams, and earned income.
- Wednesday bulletin is communicated weekly from Columbia to field to keep people informed about agency activities.
- Accessibility to agency leaders has improved over the past few years.
- Leadership continues to be successful in the replacement of equipment.
- Very concerned about the individual employee. EX: Agency improved logistical support at incidents.
- Concerned about and responds to public safety needs.
- Promotes media coverage of forestry activities.

1.0 LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- **Senior management has not effectively communicated a long-term vision for SCFC in light of new fiscal realities. Agency has not articulated a vision statement.**
- **Senior management has not done a good job of using quality teams in all cases. Some have had recommendations disregarded. EX: The fitness committee's recommendations were disregarded and a lawyer's suggestions were adopted instead.**
- **On an ongoing basis, there is no method for communications upward in the organization. Agency should attempt to get more input from employees on issues that affect how their jobs are performed.**
- **Senior leadership has not created a system for promoting self-esteem by recognizing and rewarding performance.**
- Business planning process is not well communicated to those outside senior management.
- Senior management should be more proactive in learning more about customer requirements and needs. EX: Spend more time in the field asking employees and customers.

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- While senior managers review some performance measures, results and performance criteria are not subsequently shared with agency employees. EX: Warden may not know what is on the survey.
- Many budget-related decisions may not fully anticipate citizen impact. EX: Putting Florence County in Marion Area.
- Qualifications for law enforcement certifications have not been coordinated effectively in the light of recent retirements and position vacancies.
- Senior management has no systematic approach for evaluating future opportunities for the agency.
- Follow-up on the agency strategic plan has been inconsistent.
- Agency has not effectively addressed ethical requirements in some areas, leading to less than optimum customer service. EX: Lists of vendors (timber buyers, etc.) could be reassessed to include disclaimers to check references and reputations.
- More equitable treatment for all categories of employees: work hours, pay, recognition, and career paths.
- There should be a Columbia staff meeting similar to the regional meetings and all employees should be encouraged to attend.
- Communication from senior management does not consistently reach down through all supervisory levels.
- Civic involvement is not actively & uniformly encouraged throughout the agency. EX: Flex time, etc. to participate in Habitat for Humanity, Harvest Hope Food Bank. However, some locations do encourage civic involvement.

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING STRENGTHS

- A broad, well-developed strategic plan has been put in place and made available to all employees. The plan has been updated in the past 2 years.
- Surveys on various services are reviewed and considered during the planning process.
- SCFC analyzes and projects needs for replacement of fire suppression equipment.
- Data on most major services are collected and available for comparison.
- Agency is beginning to link items in the strategic plan with EPMS.
- Strategic plan has long-term goals that address most major functions.
- Agency strategic plan addresses the development of the workforce and training plans have been developed for some groups within the agency.
- Agency plan broadly addresses future allocation of some resources.
- The plan identifies some customers' needs.

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2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

- **There is no overall human resource plan for tomorrow, much less 2-5 years out. Agency's human resources plan needs to be more fully developed and aligned with the strategic plan (pay, some training, succession planning, career path development).**
- **Need to develop short-term goals and action plans supporting strategic goals and communicate implementation efforts throughout the agency.**
- SCFC could improve and expand the methods for ensuring that the strategic plan is communicated and understood by employees (where they fit in).
- SCFC could be more proactive in soliciting external customer input.
- Agency strategic plan has not been updated as frequently as needed. No regular schedule for updating the plan.
- SCFC could improve the process of getting internal customer input into the planning process -- too limited in scope. Include field personnel in the development of the plan.
- Comparative information is not always shared with employees to allow for progress to be monitored.
- Include a pay and promotion plan for the field in the strategic plan (uniform throughout the agency).
- The plan should have a limited number of realistic goals.
- The current plan appears to be heavily weighted toward industry.
- There is no overall plan for resource allocation. Future resource allocation addressed by strategic plan does not directly coincide with current decisions being made.
- Include information systems technology in the strategic plan.
- There is no systematic performance management system---a void in performance indicators. SCFC could improve on the projection of performance measures in future years.

3.0 CUSTOMER FOCUS STRENGTHS

- Agency uses a variety of approaches to make the services available to and accessible to customers. Brochures are available at multiple locations and the agency web site provides information, contacts and electronic forms.
- The agency uses customer feedback to improve service quality by revising procedures. SCFC collects customer satisfaction data via surveys from those who purchase seedlings, receive forest services and have forest management plans developed. Survey results are reviewed by the appropriate supervisor. Agency is beginning to track trends in the customer satisfaction data.
- When developing forest management plans, landowners receive customized services. The agency also varies other services and approaches, such as prescribed burning and the type of equipment used, according to the needs of the customers.

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- SCFC has effectively identified customers in a broad sense, but should strive to identify new and changing needs of customers.
- Customer complaints are responded to on an individual basis.

3.0 CUSTOMER FOCUS OPPORTUNITIES

- **SCFC has not systematically communicated key customer requirements to employees. EX: After forest management plan survey was completed, agency did not send it out to other employees for input or suggestions for improvement.**
- SCFC could improve access to information for customers by emphasizing more personal contact in communities and considering Spanish language materials.
- SCFC could more effectively utilize County Forestry Boards as sources of customer feedback from communities.
- SCFC does not formally collect customer satisfaction data on the largest service, fire suppression.
- The agency has not tracked customer satisfaction trends over time, but has begun doing so. Customer satisfaction trend data collection and analysis could be improved through the use of follow-up calls (weeks or months later) and through the validation of the survey instruments.
- Agency needs to more specifically segment customer groups and identify priorities among groups. EX: We need to make sure that the services are in sync with the entire agency.
- Customer satisfaction data should be made available to the field.
- There is no systematic, central process to handle customer complaints (receive, follow-up, disseminate results).
- Use a uniform set of customer satisfaction questions across the agency in addition to area-specific questions.

4.0 INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS STRENGTHS

- Area offices receive morning reports with rainfall, calls, acres burned, weather, aircraft activity and readiness level each day. Additionally info is paged directly to employees.
- Data is used to project future organizational needs for equipment and tree seedlings.
- SCFC reviews data on customer service/satisfaction, dispatch, response times, quality of service and some cost checks.
- Information is made available to the public (news media).
- The agency occasionally compares information with other similar organizations.

4.0 INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS OPPORTUNITIES

- **SCFC needs to study the reliability of the paging system used by the agency.**

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- **Eliminate redundancy in information collection and dissemination. Many data systems in the agency are not integrated and require redundant data entry. EX: Law enforcement incident report and incident checklist report; A-1 and timesheets; and equipment inspection report and fuel report are kept on separate systems. Technology should be used to eliminate redundant data requirements.**
- **Performance measures do not exist for all parts of the agency. SCFC does not regularly use benchmark (comparative) data to analyze performance against other similar organizations.**
- At the regional level, the data reporting requirements need to be made more consistent.
- Overall, the SCFC holds some information very closely that could be beneficial to field personnel.
- SCFC does not have cost-efficiency data on many agency services.
- There is a need to share more statewide information on fire activity to allow for better response to requests for assistance.
- Many decisions seem to be made with a greater concern for political considerations than data. EX: Warden location and equipment replacement.
- Employees require additional information regarding leave status. Monthly reports stating leave available would be helpful.
- SCFC does not have a systematic approach for using data to plan for future needs. Inconsistent approach to projecting future needs from data - some items data driven, others are not.
- Management decisions are sometimes based on industry demands rather than facts.
- Evidence suggests that not all decisions are based on facts. EX: Field services pricing structure; ranger replacement; and dispatch operations.
- Data from measures that do exist should be used to update the strategic plan.

5.0 HUMAN RESOURCES STRENGTHS

- Safety is emphasized. Specifically: no smoking facilities; CPR; defensive driving; first aid training; health screenings; OSHA monitoring; improved safety clothing (Nomex); and improved equipment safety features.
- Collaboration between employees and job flexibility are strengths. Agency has location-specific work schedule flexibility. Agency's informal approach to doing business provides for considerable collaboration opportunities among employees.
- A structured training program exists for foresters and firefighters. SCFC has developed training guides for wardens, rangers, technicians, dispatchers and foresters. In addition, the Warden Technician and Forest Technician positions indicate planning for future needs by the agency. The agency strategic plan reflects the intent to plan effectively for the use of human resources in the future.

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- Agency has made considerable progress in the area of training in recent years including creating a basic management-training program and providing S-Class training through the Forest Service. Basic fire training programs and supplemental training helps address the important needs of the agency.
- New employees receive an extensive two-part orientation in the Pee Dee Region to acquaint them with the agency plan and their role in fulfilling the plan.
- Warden and warden technician programs are implemented to accomplish agency plans and goals.
- SCFC has both bonus and performance pay options in place when funds are available. Agency uses four types of pay increases out of a possible seven.
- Workforce planning was initiated to some extent with the voluntary separation and retirement incentive programs, leading to decisions to fill certain critical positions in the subsequent fiscal year.
- EPMS is actively used with a universal review date process.

5.0 HUMAN RESOURCES OPPORTUNITIES

- **SCFC does not have a systematic approach to reward and recognize employees for their achievements and contributions.**
- **SCFC has not engaged in meaningful workforce and succession planning for the future. No process is in place to ensure that the agency will have the appropriate people, with the appropriate skills in place to meet future needs.**
- **Approach used by SCFC to implement the fitness standards has alienated many long-term employees. There is no comprehensive wellness program other than the physical fitness program. A program should include the opportunity to provide education about physical fitness and proper nutrition. Incentives should be offered to encourage employees to participate.**
- **Agency does not monitor and track employees' satisfaction trends over time.**
- **There should be flex time and cross-training throughout the agency used consistently.**
- **SCFC has no formal employee orientation program.**
- SCFC does not consistently use the EPMS process to provide feedback to employees. Supervisory effectiveness in using the EPMS process is not monitored nor considered when evaluating managers. EPMS should be a significant tool for pay and promotion. Appears some supervisors advised to grade "on the curve."
- Need to follow through on career paths---training, advancement opportunities. There is not a structured training program in place for most employees. In addition agency does not have a consistent approach to involving employees in the identification of training needs and opportunities both internal and external. EX: No internal training or external funds available for administrative, computer specialists and maintenance personnel.
- Positions are uncertain other than warden and warden technician programs.
- SCFC does not actively promote Employee Assistance Program to employees.

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- Senior management has not effectively communicated values to employees. EX: Fitness requirements and litigation vs. health of employees.
- Need 360-degree evaluations to include supervisors.
- The agency needs to address safety and security in all agency offices. *Evacuation plan. *Building security---strangers in the building.
- No career path opportunities for non-foresters.

6.0 PROCESS MANAGEMENT STRENGTHS

- The agency is flexible in response to changing customer base. Agency is willing to modify service processes based upon changing customer requirements. EX: Seedling lottery, purchases of new plows, 6-way blades, using foam to make water wetter, and more insect and disease visits.
- SCFC provides training to several different partners including tree planters, loggers, prescribed fire managers, local fire departments and school personnel.
- Agency has comprehensive policy and procedure manuals that have been regularly updated.
- Some key work processes have well-designed approaches that meet quality standards. EX: Large fire reviews; response times; and many federal forest management programs.
- Request for proposal process allows the agency to make specifications clear to bidders on major purchases.
- Customer requirements are incorporated in work processes.
- Technology has improved the fire dispatch system.
- The agency has implemented voice mail at headquarters allowing for after-hours contact.
- The agency holds **some** suppliers accountable for the quality of goods they provide. SCFC pre-tests some equipment, such as tractors and plows, prior to making mass purchases. Additionally, seed quality is monitored.
- The credit card program is a major improvement for employee purchases, and accepting credit cards from customers at certain locations.

6.0 PROCESS MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **Critical agency work processes are not documented. Key processes are not flow charted and many policies and procedures are difficult to locate in the manual.**
- **Data management processes need to be integrated across the agency.**
- Numerous agency work processes are not consistently managed using key performance standards. EX: Fire coverage patterns, dispatch operations, development of forest management surveys.
- Agency has no systematic approach to incorporating key measures into work processes.

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- Agency has no systematic approach to improving day-to-day support processes, essentially reactive to problems.
- Agency does not consistently monitor the quality of products and services from all suppliers.
- Area reviews are not reported in a manner that communicates best practices to all Areas statewide.
- Internal customer requirements are not consistently incorporated into the agency processes. EX: Announcements on agency training opportunities and telecommunication services like radios and pagers.
- Statistical process control techniques are not used to analyze work processes.
- The agency does not provide adequate training and other assistance to all service providers. EX: Contract fliers.
- The front desk at headquarters should be manned continuously.
- In some areas, customer data is not routinely or periodically used to update processes.

7.0 BUSINESS RESULTS STRENGTHS

- The agency consistently focuses on improving the quality of external customer services.
- Agency has used operations performance measures to monitor financial performance. EX: FIA and economic impact.
- Agency has used employee suggestions to make improvements in operational performance through Employee Innovation System and improvement teams.
- SCFC has improved performance in FIA, wildfire response time, law enforcement, BMP compliance and recreational use of state forests.
- SCFC has positive customer satisfaction trend data on forest services, nurseries, and forest management.
- Agency has shown progress in implementing many actions in the strategic plan over the past several years.
- Some improvements have been noted in the management of the SCFC physical assets via consolidations. EX: Shops.
- The agency continues to survive and do a good job despite severe budget reductions.
- The agency seeks and uses input from external customers to improve services and work processes.
- The agency uses trends of financial data to evaluate and to compare itself with similar organizations.

7.0 BUSINESS RESULTS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Employee input should be solicited and used to improve human resources programs. Training; compensation; recognition; flexible work hours; safety and security.**

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- **The agency should analyze trends of internal and external customer satisfaction data and compare the data to other similar organizations.**
- Customer satisfaction results have not been used to improve agency work processes, update the strategic plan or compare results to similar organizations.
- Measure of employee effectiveness needs to be established.
- No evidence of measurements or improved results related to the area of supplier performance.
- SCFC has no formal quality improvement program.
- Agency does not consistently share reports on financial or cost improvement results, trends, or benchmarks to employees.
- Employee satisfaction data has not been kept and no evidence of improvement exists.
- Changes in the health and safety programs have resulted in decreases in employee morale and satisfaction. EX: Fitness program.
- Little evidence that senior management has used operational performance data to improve the use of labor, material, or other capital assets over time.
- All customer satisfaction data, including complaints, should be received and analyzed by a central department.