

NEWS RELEASE

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## **CONSULTANT REFERRAL NETWORK REACHES 100 CONSULTANTS, NEARLY 300 SEARCHES**

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to announce that more than 100 consultants are now listed in the Consultant Referral Network<sup>®</sup>. In addition, in the last two weeks, two consultant/client engagements have been finalized: one matching a Minnesota-based consultant to a manufacturer in Madison, WI, and one matching a Michigan-based consultant to a health care provider in Flint, MI. A total of 294 searches have been made since March 1, 2005, producing six consulting engagements.

Says Susan Hyde, director of Organization Development with HealthPlus in Michigan: “[The Consultant Referral Network] was a very useful tool in identifying the best fit for our organization's needs.”

Located at [www.consultantreferralnetwork.org](http://www.consultantreferralnetwork.org), the Consultant Referral Network is a dynamic, web-enabled search tool that connects improvement experts to the organizations which seek them. This service allows organizations to outline their needs in terms of subject matter expertise sought, type of assistance desired (consulting, training, coaching, speaking, or facilitating), sector/industry expertise required, size of consulting firm desired, desired location of consulting firm, and years of experience preferred. The organization can also weight the relative importance of each variable, and the tool will then identify up to five consultants or firms that best match the client's needs. There is no charge for organizations to use the tool to find improvement experts.

Refinements recently made to the tool now allow clients to also conduct directory searches. For example, these searches allow clients to see all consultants with a specific subject matter expertise (such as Six Sigma, leadership, or strategic planning), all consultants with particular sector/industry experience, or all consultants located in a specific state.

“Use of the Consultant Referral Network continues to grow,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality. “With over 100 consultants listed in the service, the tool has good breath and depth of improvement experts, making it more valuable for organizations seeking assistance in improving their business. And with the additional functionality of the tool, clients now have the choice of how they search for consultants.”

The Consultant Referral Network was officially launched March 1, 2005, and is managed by a consortium of state quality award programs in Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Washington, and Wisconsin. Per month, the Network now averages over 11,000 hits, nearly 1500 independent visits, and about 25 client searches.

“Our goal is to increase the awareness and use of this tool,” continues Lassiter. “These enhancements will make the tool more robust for clients who seek assistance in improving aspects of their organization. And as the number of clients using the tool increases, the tool becomes more valuable for consultants as a source of possible leads.”

### **About the Washington State Quality Award**

WSQA is a not-for-profit organization committed to encouraging and recognizing performance excellence in business, education, government, non-profit and healthcare. The organization champions the concepts and tools of Performance Excellence as based on the *Baldrige Criteria*. These *Criteria* help organizations increase their capabilities, expand their knowledge and skills and improve their performance. WSQA encourages excellence and contributes to making Washington a better place to live, learn and work by helping organizations achieve superior results through the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. For more information, visit [www.wsqa.net](http://www.wsqa.net).

### **About the Minnesota Council for Quality**

Founded in 1987, the Minnesota Council for Quality is a non-profit corporation that advances improvement and performance excellence within organizations, individuals, and communities. The Council helps leaders identify strengths and improvement opportunities and builds networks that bring information, resources, knowledge, and best practices to organizations desiring to improve. We do this by offering services such as our Baldrige-based organizational assessments (and Minnesota Quality Award), the Performance Improvement Network, the Consultant Referral Network, and the improvement Clearinghouse, and by collaborating with other non-profits that focus on improvement. For more information, please visit [www.councilforquality.org](http://www.councilforquality.org).

### **About the Kansas Center for Performance Excellence**

The Kansas Center for Performance Excellence is the education, training and consulting arm of the Kansas Award for Excellence Foundation (KAE), a 501c(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to promote and recognize performance excellence in Kansas. KAE is the state affiliate of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. For more information about the Kansas Center for Performance Excellence, visit <http://www.kae.bluestep.net/> or call 800-743-6767

### **About the Michigan Quality Council**

The mission of the Michigan Quality Council is to assist organizations in improving their performance through the use of proven quality concepts and techniques that ensure desirable results for products, services and customer satisfaction. The MQC does this by providing professional development; advising/consulting in partnership with others; assessing and providing feedback on strengths and improvement areas; recognizing exemplary performance; and identifying and disseminating best practices. For more information, please visit [www.michiganquality.org](http://www.michiganquality.org).

### **About the Ohio Partnership for Excellence**

The Ohio Partnership for Excellence™ (OPE) is a non-profit organization that works with organizations to simply become better at what they do. By using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as a framework, OPE helps organizations see improved results. Many organizations see lowered costs, improved productivity, increased profitability, and rises in both employee and customer satisfaction. For more information, please visit [www.partnershipohio.org](http://www.partnershipohio.org).

### **About the Wisconsin Forward Award**

The mission of Wisconsin Forward Award, Inc. is to promote and recognize the adoption of high performance management principles and practices by Wisconsin organizations in order to achieve world-class status for Wisconsin products and services; help meet international competition; and enhance continuous learning, quality improvement and performance excellence. For more information, please visit [www.forwardaward.org](http://www.forwardaward.org).

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