

## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **MINNESOTA ADDS WASHINGTON STATE AS PARTNER ON CONSULTANT REFERRAL NETWORK**

The Minnesota Council for Quality – in cooperation with the Kansas Center for Performance Excellence, the Michigan Quality Council, the Ohio Partnership for Excellence, and the Wisconsin Forward Award – is pleased to announce that the Washington State Quality Award has agreed to offer the Consultant Referral Network© in the state of Washington.

Located at [www.consultantreferralnetwork.org](http://www.consultantreferralnetwork.org), the Consultant Referral Network is a dynamic, web-enabled search tool that connects organizational improvement experts to client organizations seeking them. This service allows clients 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 client can also weight the relative importance of each variable. The tool will then identify up to five consultants or firms that best match the client's needs.

“We are extremely pleased to add Washington to this growing partnership,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality. “The Consultant Referral Network is a unique tool that benefits consultants and the clients who seek them.”

Jennifer Sprecher, Executive Director of Washington State Quality Award adds: “This Network adds a valuable service to WSQA's portfolio of products. Today, there is no systematic way for organizations in Washington to find improvement consultants. This service will help them efficiently and effectively find resources to help them reach higher levels of excellence. It will also be of benefit to the consultants in our state who are always looking for organizations who seek their expertise. We are delighted to join the other five states in bringing this valuable tool to stakeholders in Washington.”

There are three benefits of this service to organizations. First, the tool can accelerate an organization's search for improvement resources because it is quicker and more efficient than “word of mouth” and traditional searches. Second, it is neutral, independent, and unbiased. Third, there is currently no charge for organizations to use this tool to search for consultants, making it easy and cost-effective to use.

The service also offers three distinct benefits to consultants. First, it provides a potential channel of leads and a legitimate mechanism to create market awareness for the consultant's services and capabilities. Second, it is independent and unbiased, making it credible and fair. And third, it is reasonably priced for consultants to get listed.

“This service provides valuable for all stakeholders,” says Lassiter. “The organizations win because they can more efficiently locate organizational improvement resources to help them advance improvement efforts in their operations. The consultants win because they may now get connected with organizations interested in their services. And the state quality programs win because we are offering a valuable service to stakeholders in our states.”

Since its official launch in March, nearly 100 consultants have registered in the Network, more than 10,000 independent users have visited the Network, clients have conducted nearly 200 searches, and four consulting engagements have results from referrals.

#### **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 that helps organizations improve performance and competitiveness. The Council's primary service is a comprehensive organizational assessment that identifies strengths and improvement opportunities and serves as the foundation for the Minnesota Quality Award. In addition, the Council brokers improvement-related resources, information, knowledge, and best practices within and between Minnesota organizations. 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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