

Annual Georgia Oglethorpe Awards Conference on Thursday

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The Twelfth Annual Georgia Oglethorpe Awards conference will be held in Atlanta on Thursday, October 29. You may wonder, "What are Georgia Oglethorpe Awards?" Further, "Why might I be interested?"

Let me provide a little context. In the 1980's, business and political leaders were concerned about the competitive abilities of American companies on the worldwide stage. After a decade of debate, a bill passed Congress in 1987 establishing a national quality award. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law, and the National Quality Award was initiated.

Since then, U. S. Presidents have presented 79 awards to representatives of the recognized companies.

The purpose of the award is to recognize organizations for their achievements in quality and performance excellence. A secondary purpose is to disseminate best practices from these leading-edge organizations to other establishments that seek improvement.

After the award was established on the national level, states were encouraged to create parallel programs to introduce local organizations to the application and assessment process. Georgia is one of forty states with its own program. Georgia uses the same criteria as the national award. A copy of the current "Criteria for Performance Excellence" is available on the website, www.georgiaoglethorpe.org.

Through the questions contained in the "Criteria for Performance Excellence," leaders are encouraged to evaluate the cause-and-effect relationship between their operational approaches and actual results. The objective is to continually improve those methods as a means to improve organizational outcomes.

The Georgia program has three levels of recognition. The first level is called "Georgia Focus Recognition." Organizations new to the "Criteria" framework and the assessment process are encouraged to start here. Using a self-assessment process, leaders identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Awareness and use of the "Criteria for Performance Excellence" can guide organizational leaders to create and sustain a successful, higher performing organization.

The middle level of recognition is the "Georgia Progress Award." Providing a logical progression to more comprehensive use of the "Criteria," the evaluation process is the same for the top level of recognition but a bit more streamlined. Trained examiners review your 25-page application and, if considered strong enough, visit your location to observe your operations in person.

The top level of recognition is the "Georgia Oglethorpe Award." Using the same criteria and review process that is used for the national award, organizations are required to show their progress and current levels of achievement in a 50-page application. Progress over time is required showing internal improvement and comparison with the best organizations in the world.

One of the major reasons for participating in these assessments is to receive extensive feedback from experienced examiners. At all three recognition levels, your organization receives valuable insights and consultation from knowledgeable experts for a very small cost!

Here is a brief description of the seven categories in the "Criteria for Performance Excellence":

Leadership—Examines how leaders guide the organization and how the organization practices good citizenship.

Strategic planning—Examines how the organization sets strategic directions and key action plans.

Customer and market focus—Examines how the organization acquires, satisfies, and retains customers.

Measurement, analysis, and knowledge management—Examines the management and effective use of information to support key organization processes.

Workforce focus—Examines how the organization enables its workforce to develop its full potential.

Process management—Examines how key processes are designed, managed, and improved.

Results—Examines the organization's performance relative to competitors in its key business areas.

Interested in registering for the conference? Go to the website, www.georgiaoglethorpe.org, and click on "conference" to learn more, or call the Georgia Oglethorpe Awards office at (404)-232-3808.