



Communities of Resilience & Excellence™



Quarterly Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Over the past few months, I've found myself having the same conversation with leaders from very different organizations and communities. Whether they're in healthcare, local government, education, nonprofit organizations, or business, the challenges sound remarkably similar. Resources are stretched. Expectations continue to rise. The issues they face have become increasingly interconnected, and the path forward is rarely a straight line.

Yet amid those conversations, I've also noticed something encouraging.



Special thanks to Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc., a Diamond Sponsor of Communities of Excellence and Title Sponsor of the 2026 Conference.
—Stephanie Norling,
President & CEO of
Communities of Resilience &
Excellence (C.O.R.E.)



More leaders are recognizing that today's challenges can't be solved by any one organization working alone. Real progress happens when people share a common purpose, make decisions based on data and evidence, learn from one another, and build systems that improve over time. That realization is changing how organizations work within their own walls and how they work together across their communities.

That belief has always been at the heart of C.O.R.E.'s work.

Over the past several months, we've continued expanding opportunities for communities and organizations to strengthen their improvement journey. Through our workshops, webinars, our assessment and recognition program, and the C.O.R.E. Impact Pathway, we've had the privilege of working alongside leaders who are committed to moving beyond good intentions toward measurable, sustainable results.



One development that I find especially meaningful is the growing connection between organizational excellence and community excellence. Organizations don't operate in a vacuum. Their success depends on the strength of the communities they serve, just as thriving communities depend on strong organizations from every sector. Healthcare, education, business, nonprofit organizations, local government, and community collaboratives all have an important role to play, and each has something valuable to learn from the others.

You'll see that reflected throughout this newsletter.

Our Partner Spotlight features The Alliance for Performance Excellence, an organization with which we've collaborated for many years. Together, we've worked to expand awareness of performance excellence, strengthen evaluation and recognition programs, and support organizations and communities on their journey toward excellence. That longstanding relationship continues to create new opportunities to advance our shared mission of helping organizations and communities achieve better outcomes through proven performance improvement principles.

You'll also read about our upcoming 2026 Baldrige Conference: *The Rhythm of Excellence*. This year's conference will intentionally bring together leaders from both organizational and community settings because many of today's most important conversations transcend traditional boundaries. Whether you're leading a hospital, school district, nonprofit organization, manufacturing company, government agency, or community collaborative, the underlying questions are remarkably similar: How do we build resilient organizations? How do we create cultures that continuously improve? How do we translate vision into measurable results? And how do we strengthen the communities we all serve?

Another highlight this quarter is welcoming Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas as our organization-wide Diamond Sponsor and Title Sponsor of the 2026 conference. Their commitment represents far more than sponsorship of an event. It reflects a shared belief that improving systems, strengthening partnerships, and investing in communities creates lasting impact. We are deeply grateful for their confidence in our mission and look forward to working together to help more communities thrive.



As I look ahead, I'm optimistic. Not because the work is becoming easier, but because more leaders are recognizing that today's challenges require new ways of thinking and working together. Across the country, I continue to meet people who are willing to ask difficult questions, challenge long-held assumptions, and invest in building stronger organizations and stronger communities for the future.

Thank you for being part of this growing community. Whether you've been involved with C.O.R.E. for years or are just beginning your journey with us, your commitment to excellence makes this work possible. I hope you'll find ideas, inspiration, and opportunities throughout this newsletter that will help you continue making a meaningful difference where you live and work.

As always, thank you for everything you do to strengthen your organizations, your communities, and the people they serve.

Stephanie Norling
President & CEO
Communities of Resilience & Excellence (C.O.R.E.)



PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Aligning the Stars for Community Excellence: The C.O.R.E. and Alliance Partnership

Sometimes it takes the stars to align for greater things to happen – such is the case with the partnership between Communities of Resilience & Excellence and The Alliance for Performance Excellence.

Founded in 2005, The Alliance is the umbrella organization of state, regional, sector, and national Baldrige-based programs across the United States (C.O.R.E. has been a member of the Alliance for many years).

It promotes the Baldrige Excellence Framework and fosters a culture of excellence by providing resources, training, and evaluation and recognition to organizations and communities seeking to enhance their performance.



Beginning in 2026, the Alliance also administers the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award on behalf of NIST. And, while The Alliance and C.O.R.E. have partnered in many ways for many years, The Alliance assuming the responsibility for the national Baldrige Award is where a true strategic opportunity was born. Here is a little more context...

The Alliance and many of its members have collaborated with C.O.R.E. since the creation of the Communities of Excellence 2026 concept. Here are a few ways:

- many Alliance member programs have provided judges and examiners to C.O.R.E. for the evaluation and recognition process
- many members of C.O.R.E.'S faculty, mentor ranks, and other volunteers have come from within Alliance member networks
- Alliance members have helped build awareness, helped with outreach, and helped encourage communities to embrace community excellence, the CORE Guide, and other C.O.R.E. services



PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

But when The Alliance started administering the national Baldrige Award, a new level of partnership emerged in that communities are now eligible to apply for – and potentially receive – national recognition with the prestigious Baldrige Award. Passed by Congress and signed by the President in 2022, communities became an eligible category for the Baldrige Award; however, Congress never appropriated funds that would allow it to “go live” for communities to start applying. As The Alliance is a private nonprofit that doesn’t rely on Congressional appropriations, one of the first decisions it made was to immediately allow communities who have received C.O.R.E.’s top tier Award (Gold) to apply for national recognition. There is one eligible community now and several more that could achieve eligibility in the near future if they receive the Gold Award. The Alliance is actively working with C.O.R.E. to recruit and encourage communities to start and continue their journey to excellence, including applying for national evaluation and recognition.

The Alliance and C.O.R.E. are also exploring other ways to expand its partnership, including new service development, more outreach and cobranded marketing, fully integrating and cohosting the fall Baldrige Conference (this year October 12-13 in New Orleans – it will offer great learning, great networking, great energy; [click here for more information](#) and consider attending!). The Alliance and C.O.R.E. are also exploring how to better leverage the unique nature of The Alliance members’ network, essentially using state and regional programs as a “distribution system” to deploy community services that C.O.R.E. develops.

For more information on the Alliance, visit here. Here’s to a strong partnership only growing stronger and more impactful in the future! Here’s to expanding community excellence!



WHAT'S NEW

Announcing Our Diamond Sponsor for the 2026 C.O.R.E. Conference!

We are thrilled to announce that Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. (MHM) has joined us as an organization-wide Diamond Sponsor, which includes serving as the Title Sponsor for our upcoming Community Resilience & Excellence (C.O.R.E.) Conference!



SERVING HUMANITY TO HONOR GOD

MHM is an incredible organization that goes beyond traditional healthcare to address systemic inequities, ensuring more people can reach their full potential for health and life. Through this shared vision, MHM's generous sponsorship will directly support our mission to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and improve quality of life through measurable, systems-level approaches.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome and heartfelt thank you to Methodist Healthcare Ministries!

Save the Date

Join leaders and professionals from across the country for the 2026 Baldrige Conference: The Rhythm of Excellence, hosted by The Alliance for Performance Excellence and Communities of Resilience & Excellence (C.O.R.E.).

This year's conference will bring together organizational and community leaders from healthcare, education, manufacturing, nonprofit, government, and service sectors to explore innovation, leadership, resilience, and performance excellence at both the organizational and community level.

