



Communities of Resilience & Excellence



# Quarterly Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

This year marks a significant milestone not just for C.O.R.E., but for the broader field of performance excellence.

For the first time, the Alliance for Performance Excellence is administering the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award process on behalf of the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Alongside this transition comes something many of us have been working toward for years—the introduction of “Community” as an eligible category for the national Baldrige Award. For us, this is more than a new award category. It signals a shift in how we define and recognize excellence.



*“This moment represents more than a new award category. It signals a broader shift in how we think about performance excellence in this country. Communities are increasingly being recognized not just for individual programs or initiatives, but for their ability to align people, priorities, and action around measurable results.”*

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

For decades, the Baldrige framework has helped organizations strengthen leadership, strategy, operations, and results. But those of us working at the community level have long known that the most complex challenges—health, housing, education, economic opportunity—do not sit within a single organization. They exist across systems. And improving them requires alignment, coordination, and sustained effort across sectors.

The introduction of the Community category acknowledges that reality. It recognizes that performance excellence is not only an organizational pursuit—it is a community one.



At C.O.R.E., this evolution reflects years of work alongside communities across the country. The C.O.R.E. Guide, developed and refined with communities nationwide, now serves as the foundation for the Community category while remaining aligned with the principles of the Baldrige Excellence Framework. It reflects years of learning about what it actually takes to move from good intentions to measurable improvements in quality of life. That includes building strong cross-sector teams, aligning around shared priorities, using data to guide decisions, and staying focused on results over time.

We have seen firsthand what happens when communities commit to this work. Leaders move beyond isolated initiatives toward shared direction. Data becomes a tool for alignment, not just reporting. Fragmented efforts become more coordinated and aligned. And over time, those shifts lead to real, measurable outcomes.

To be eligible for the national award, communities must first achieve top-level recognition through the C.O.R.E. Assessment and Recognition Program. This creates an important pathway for communities that are demonstrating sustained, cross-sector progress and measurable improvements in quality of life.

As more communities advance this work, we look forward to seeing what becomes possible when community-level excellence is recognized, measured, and sustained at a national level.

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



## **LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT**

### **Advancing Excellence Through Purpose-Driven Leadership**

At C.O.R.E, we believe leadership extends beyond any single role, organization, or title. Some of the most important leadership we see happens when individuals step forward to help align efforts across a community, bringing people together, building trust, and focusing on what improves quality of life. This quarter, we are proud to highlight Chari S. Mullen, Principal Consultant of CSM Practical Solutions and C.O.R.E. board member, who was recognized with the Baldrige Foundation's Leadership Excellence Award in the Community category at the Quest for Excellence Conference this past April in Baltimore, Maryland.

As part of the recognition, honorees were invited to reflect on what leadership means to them. Chari's perspective closely reflects the values we see in communities doing this work well:



*Chari S. Mullen, Principal Consultant of CSM Practical Solutions and C.O.R.E. Board Member*

*The Baldrige Framework guides leaders to craft a vision, core values, and direction to align community efforts, processes, and goals. It emphasizes that excellence starts with how leaders listen, make decisions, and respect those they serve.*

*Attentive listening and humble action encourage innovation and knowledge exchange. By modeling ethical judgment and accountability, leaders strengthen governance. When leaders promote collaboration and continuous learning, they transform community compassion into coordinated efforts.*

*Leadership is collective stewardship that guides people and systems toward a shared, measurable, and sustainable future of excellence. As Helen Keller reminds us, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."*



## LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

Chari's words are a powerful reminder that leadership is not just about guiding an organization, it is about helping a community move forward together. When leaders listen, align around shared priorities, and stay focused on results, they create the conditions for lasting, meaningful impact.

We are grateful for Chari's leadership and for all those working across communities to strengthen collaboration, improve outcomes, and build a more resilient future.





# Advancing Community Impact: 2025 Highlights



## **A Clearer Model for Community Impact**

In 2025, C.O.R.E. introduced the Impact Pathway, a milestone-based model that gives communities a clearer, more actionable path from forming a core team to achieving sustained, measurable outcomes. This work was supported by a biennial revision of the C.O.R.E. Guide, refining the framework to better reflect how communities move from alignment to results.

## **A Stronger Foundation for Data and Decision-Making**

We expanded the Common Community Scorecard from five to seven interconnected quality of life measures and updated them using the most current data. The updated cascading measures provide a deeper view of community conditions, helping teams better understand root causes and target action. Expanded data trainings are also equipping communities to interpret and apply data more effectively.

## **Elevating the Role of Results in the Field**

C.O.R.E. continued to shift the field toward results by consistently highlighting measurable outcomes from participating communities. Across the network, communities are demonstrating improvements in areas such as health, economic conditions, housing, and system coordination, reinforcing what is possible when efforts are aligned and sustained. positioning, and created a more cohesive and accessible framework for communities and partners.

## **Expanding Strategic Partnerships**

C.O.R.E. deepened relationships with healthcare systems and national organizations, positioning the work as a contributor to population health and systems-level change. These partnerships are expanding both reach and opportunities for integration.



## 2025 HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

### Positioning Community Excellence Nationally

With the Alliance for Performance Excellence now administering the Baldrige Award process, the C.O.R.E. Guide is serving as the foundation for the new Community category. This milestone reflects both the strength of the work on the ground and the growing national visibility of community-level performance.

### A Stronger Brand and Clearer Framework

C.O.R.E. completed a comprehensive rebrand in 2025, including the transition from Communities of Excellence 2026 to Communities of Resilience & Excellence and the formal naming of the C.O.R.E. Guide. This work clarified the organization's identity, strengthened its national positioning, and created a more cohesive and accessible framework for communities and partners.

## WHAT'S NEW

### LISTENING THAT LEADS TO ACTION: SURVEY DESIGN FOR REAL INSIGHT

Join this dynamic one-hour workshop to discover how several communities are turning curiosity into action, even when the numbers don't tell the full story. In northwest Missouri, a cross-sector team refused to accept incomplete answers about population decline. For a deeper understanding, they tapped into the many voices of people who know the region best: those who stayed, left, returned, and chose to move in.

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

11 a.m. PT / 12 p.m. MT / 1 p.m. CT / 2 p.m. ET.

\$45 (Free for C.O.R.E. Alumni and Engagement Program members with promo code)

**Save Your Spot Today**

