

## — Breathing new life into national quality awards —

In 1987, a law was enacted by the US government to create an integrated management approach to improve quality in enterprises, which gave birth to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) and its business excellence framework a year later. Since its launch, the framework has changed the way people and businesses view and run their operations. Some 80 countries have now launched their own national or local award frameworks. Sixteen APO member countries have at least one version of an award framework in place. However, the initial momentum tends to fall off after introduction.

Therefore the APO organized a seminar specifically for award administrators on quality award systems with the theme “Sustaining a Successful Quality Award System: The Next Milestone.” The program was jointly conducted with the National Productivity and Development Center of Mongolia in Ulan Bataar, 4–7 September. In addition to the primary targets of senior administrators of national award systems, others who attended included award system sponsors and government bodies directly involved in the awards. They totaled 27 participants from 15 member countries, with an observer from Bangladesh, which has not yet instituted a national quality award system.

The key objectives were to address the challenges of running a sustainable award system and benchmarking against the MBNQA 20-year learning curve. Chairman of the Board of Assessors of the Baldrige Committee David Branch addressed the MBNQA experience, and CEO of Quality Texas Dr. William Denney spoke on “Sharing best practices of Quality Texas: A regional award perspective.” A session with representatives of five selected member countries informed participants on best practices from the Asia-Pacific region in national award administration.

A regional mapping activity conducted by Dr. Luis Calingo, Dean of the Dominican University School of Business and Leadership, California, and cofacilitated by Viliame Waqalaivi, administrator of the Fiji Excellence Award, led to the agreement that award systems in APO member countries should address social development through enhanced competitiveness and productivity of local enterprises, leading to balanced prosperity. It was recommended that similar seminars be held yearly or every two years as a strategic platform for sustaining national quality award initiatives and developing an Asia-Pacific regional award system for which all APO member countries would be eligible. 🌐