

MESSAGE from THE OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

November 2017

“In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins ... not through strength, but by perseverance.” (H. Jackson Brown)

No one ever said it would be easy to champion quality and performance improvement (QPI) in Government organizations. In fact, many people don't believe that it's possible or that one can even mention the terms “quality and performance improvement” and “Government” in the same sentence. However, we, in the ASQ Government Division, not only believe that it CAN be done, but we know that it IS being done. The problem that we see is that although there are good examples of Government QPI done in pockets, it is not consistent, wide-spread, or coordinated. Furthermore, there are even fewer examples where QPI remains as a long term sustainable program. Instead, QPI lasts only as long as the latest “buzz word” or initiative (e.g., TQM, BPR, Lean, Six Sigma. etc.) is popular, or a Government leader who deeply cares is in a position of power. We have yet to infuse a culture of QPI into the fabric of our Government institutions, so it is there to stay. That said, we won't stop trying; we will *persevere!*

So, let's share with you how the ASQ Government Division has been working toward this goal and our mission of “finding, developing, and supporting quality and performance improvement champions in government.”

Booth at ASQ World Conference on Quality and Improvement



From left to right: Rich Mallory, Brian DeNiese, Mark Abrams, Marc Berson, Mary Jo Caldwell, Janice Stout, Josh Smith, and John Baranzelli

At the last ASQ World Conference on Quality and Improvement (WCQI) in May, the Government Division once again promoted our goals through an exhibit hall booth. Pictured above are several of the Government Division Leadership Council (QDLC) members. We were pleasantly surprised at the amount of activity and the quality of the conversations that took place. People are genuinely yearning for our Governments to improve quality of services, responsiveness, processing times, customer care, safety, reliability, efficiency of transactions, transparency, and much more. However, an organization has no idea where it stands, what success looks like, or the impact of its improvement efforts, without the collection of meaningful data. **So, our theme this year was “measuring quality and performance” in government.**

Annual Leadership Meeting

In conjunction with WCQI, we held the Government Division’s annual leadership meeting. We covered a lot of ground during the day-long meeting, and there was a lively discussion about how we should position the Division to grow over the next several years. The enthusiasm around promoting quality and performance across government was tremendous. Much of the conversation focused on these primary questions:

- 1) How can we as a Division function more effectively?
- 2) How can we serve our members better?
- 3) How can we reach out to others?
- 4) How can we develop and refine our special program initiatives?

The following elaborates on the topics and what has been happening since our meeting in May.

Positioning to Become More Effective

We had the privilege of being joined by Eric Hayler, the ASQ Chairman, during our Leadership Meeting. He helped set the tone for our meeting by showing his sincere support for the Government Division. This has resulted in ongoing efforts to work collaboratively in a number of areas between the Division and ASQ HQ. Bill Troy, the ASQ CEO, has also worked with our Division closely. Recently we have been coordinating on better ways to market both ASQ and the Government Division. Our goal is to continue to forge relationships with members of HQ to leverage what we can from one another and ensure alignment. For instance, several Division Officers have been participating in committees with HQ and other divisions in areas like membership, marketing, newsletters, and more.

Improving Member Services

What are the Division’s goals? To ensure we had consensus, we revisited the Division mission, vision, and objectives, during our annual meeting. We then articulated this into a **Division overview**, which has now been placed onto the ASQ Government Division website. Members should also be aware that ASQ is working on significantly improving the broader website experience over the next several months.

How do we best share ideas? Given the increase in popularity and use of social media, the Division is actively developing a new **LinkedIn page** to enable a community to form around government quality and performance improvement. We expect to have a reciprocal connection between the LinkedIn page and the ASQ **Government Division website**. During the annual meeting, we also made decisions regarding the delivery of **Division newsletters**. Instead of producing newsletters 3-4 times a year, we plan to publish and electronically disseminate 1-2 articles every 6-8 weeks, which will culminate into a single full-length newsletter each April before WCQI. The Division is also working towards establishing a program of **webinars** as another avenue to share ideas and best practices with our members.

How do we recognize great practices? The Government Division has partnered with the Lean Enterprise Division to offer **Certificates of Recognition** to those who have successfully demonstrated the application of Lean Practices within a Government organization. We notified the selected awardees this summer, completing the inaugural year of this program. To learn more about this program, contact John Baranzelli at john.baranzelli@outlook.com.

How do we know what our customers want? **Our Division wants to hear from you!** We want to know what you would like to get out of ASQ and the Government Division, in particular. In the past year, we have added a new position to our Leadership Council, a Voice of the Customer (VoC) Vice-Chair. We had invited individuals from government agencies local to the Charlotte, NC area to our annual meeting in May, to specifically learn how we could serve them better. We will continue to find ways to engage you.



Expanding Our Outreach

Collectively, we need to do more to spread the word of quality throughout government; sharing thoughts, ideas, approaches, successes and even failures. An important goal for our Division has been to build up our efforts in reaching out, finding champions of quality and performance improvement in government, and creating a network and community of change. Ideally this will also lead to a greater interest in being a part of ASQ and the Government Division, as we would like to grow our membership.

How do we build a community? As mentioned above, we believe one way is to utilize a new **LinkedIn** page that is being established to facilitate conversations and to enable connections to happen around the common interest of improving government.

How do we reach out within ASQ? The Government Division is making strides to expand our relationships within ASQ. During our Annual Meeting, we had representation from our **international** community, by Sunil Thawani, a member of the ASQ Board of Directors, who presented ideas of what international governments are seeking. We have also been trying to connect more with **regional and local** ASQ section leaders.

How do we reach out beyond ASQ? Another initiative that we have been working on is identifying **Government-focused conferences** that we can participate in, through running a booth, presenting a topic, and/or serving as a sponsor. We have and will continue to explore opportunities to hold joint conferences or sponsorships with other ASQ Divisions as well.

Promoting Performance Improvement Programs

As we have announced previously, the Government Division is proud to sponsor two special program initiatives that we believe are essential for encouraging sustainable quality and performance improvement in Government organizations. One special program is about promoting the use of Performance Metrics and the other is about encouraging the adoption of Auditable Quality Standards. These special programs are explained further below.

Performance Metrics: We embrace the notion that “if you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” Performance management is essential because it provides an excellent mechanism to measure the health of an organization, function, project or program. An entity that regularly collects meaningful data on its quality and performance, is more equipped to make “course corrections” and other improvements on a frequent basis, and this leads to effective management. We encourage Government to (1) adopt **meaningful** performance measurement practices and systems as a means of identifying improvement opportunities and developing **sustainable** improvements, (2) build a central set of **common standardized performance metrics** to enable “apples-to-apples” benchmarking between organizations and/or national averages, and (3) link performance outcomes to all associated costs to better understand the **real** value of Government services and programs.

Overall, we believe the Performance Metrics initiative can contribute significantly to sustained Government improvement for the following reasons:

- promotes fact-based decision-making
- enables organizations to clearly quantify the value (before vs. after) of performance improvement actions
- emphasizes a focus on outcomes and outcome-based management
- provides a tool for communicating to a variety of stakeholders (e.g., elected officials, internal management, citizens, etc.)
- allows for success stories to promote additional improvement efforts
- enables comparisons to other Government organizations and benchmarks to encourage improvement
- provides the business case for continuous quality and performance improvement

If you would like to learn more about or assist with this initiative, please contact Marc Berson, Chair-Elect of the Government Division, at marc.berson@practical-me.com.

Auditable Quality Standards: Another important initiative is being carried out through the Government Division’s Center for Auditable Quality Standards (CAQS). The CAQS was established to promote the adoption of Auditable (or measurable) Quality Standards for government, which have been established as an international standard for government. There are three standards: (1) the process management standard¹, (2) the system management standard, and (3) the aligned leadership objectives standard. All three standards build on each other and progressively define an agile and dynamic quality structure for government organizations. The theory and structure are explained in the book, *Auditable Quality Standards for Highly Effective Government*², and the standards are available on the Government Division web page³.

The largest single advantage of the standards is that they provide an empirical and uniform **means of measuring the maturity level of quality and performance improvement efforts** within any office or program of a government organization. We believe they establish the basis of an organization-wide quality

¹ Featured in *Quality Progress*, September, 2016, *Measuring Maturity*. <http://asq.org/quality-progress/2016/09/process-capability/measuring-maturity.html>

² Mallory, Richard, Trafford Publications, 2014. Library of Congress 2014903900., available from ASQ at: <https://asq.org/quality-press/display-item?item=P1591>.

³ The Auditable Quality Standards are provided as Featured Content on the ASQ Government Division web page at: <http://asq.org/gov/>. Additional support materials are available in the “Library” section at that web address.

scorecard that will support sustained and continuing use of quality and performance improvement practices.

Overall, we believe the Auditable Quality Standards initiative can contribute significantly to sustained Government improvement for the following reasons:

- defines the meaning of high quality in Government through comprehensive standards
- infuses a rigorous framework around the elements that quality should be composed of
- offers the basis from which to create Government policy requiring quality audits
- provides a means to evaluate the maturity level of any Government organization or program with regard to its quality and performance improvement practices
- encourages frequent attention to quality practices through periodic audits
- promotes a culture of quality and performance improvement

The Division is encouraging Government entities to partner with us in applying the standards, participating in the annual review of results, and in the development of educational materials and guidelines to support their uniform use in Government. If you would like to learn more about or assist with this initiative, please contact Rich Mallory, Vice-Chair of CAQS, at rich_mallory@yahoo.com.

Requesting Your Help!

With the many things that we hope to accomplish, we need your help. We will need to expand the Division's leadership team, and we **need volunteers** to lead committees and conduct small projects involving research or analytics. So, we are seeking experienced individuals, college (or even high school) students, and anyone in between who has a desire to help the public sector improve quality and performance. At minimum, **students** will receive letters of recommendation which they can use toward their career aspirations. If you have an interest, please contact Mark Abrams at marklabrams@gmail.com or Marc Berson at marc.berson@practical-me.com.

With this post, we're continuing our journey to promote quality and performance improvement across government organizations. Please join us in our efforts to champion a culture of quality and performance improvement (QPI) throughout government and share your questions, ideas, stories, and lessons learned with us!

Mark Abrams, Division Chair

Marc Berson, Division Chair-Elect

John Baranzelli, Immediate Past Chair