

2026-to-2027 BEST Awards Application Crosswalk

A practical guide for applicants who are familiar with the former BEST application.

At-a-Glance: The Major Structural Changes

2026 application	2027 application	What this means for applicants
Separate questions about business issues, agility, innovation, learning in the flow of work, and impact	Three complete Signature Talent Development Contributions (B1-B3)	Build three integrated cases. Each case must explain strategic importance, the chosen approach and alternatives, scale, evaluation, results, L&D's contribution, adaptation, and transferable learning.
Multiple measurement and evaluation questions in Sections D and E	Enterprise Measurement and Value (C1-C2)	Consolidate evaluation practices and enterprise-level results. Define the active body of work, distinguish evaluation levels, and explain how findings affect decisions.
Skills gaps, future of work, and agility questions	Future Readiness and Strategic Judgment (D1-D2)	Combine forward-looking evidence with deliberate choices about resources. D1 is substantially new; D2 draws on earlier skills gap and future-of-work questions.
Learning culture section and CEO endorsement	Observable evidence of leadership, access, participation, application, and outcomes	Replace broad culture claims and endorsements with behaviors, systems, reach, adoption, application, and results.
Operational and benchmarking items within the main application	Unscored profile and research appendix	Staffing, delivery, learning hours, expenditure, and selected efficiency measures remain, but they do not drive the scored narrative. An option is provided for applicants to share their data – in aggregate—for ATD's <i>State of the Industry</i> report.

How to Use This Crosswalk

Use the tables to locate material already drafted for the 2026 application. The mapping is based on content, not question number alone; one 2026 response may support several 2027 questions, and several 2026 responses may need to be combined into one new response.

- Reuse directly means the underlying data or factual content should transfer with only light editing.
- Reuse and expand means the earlier response is a useful foundation, but the 2027 question requires additional analysis or evidence.
- Reframe or combine means the content remains relevant but must be integrated with material from other 2026 answers.
- No direct equivalent means the old item is no longer requested as a stand-alone scored response; useful evidence may still belong elsewhere.

Detailed Crosswalk

Section A: Enterprise Strategy and the Role of Talent Development

2026 source	2027 destination	How to reuse or revise the work
A2. Talent strategy and business alignment	A1. Talent strategy and organizational alignment	Reuse and expand. Add the organization's most important priorities and workforce implications, L&D's role in planning or decisions, and 1-2 concrete investments or tradeoffs that show alignment.
A3. C-level and senior-leader support	A2. Leadership, governance, and shared accountability	Reframe. Retain specific leader actions, then add shared accountability across senior leaders, business leaders, managers, and L&D; governance, sponsorship, funding, communications, and manager practices. Evidence of behavior matters more than endorsement language.
A4. TD team skills and professional development	A4. Capability of the talent development function	Reuse and expand. Identify the team's most important capability gaps, actions taken during the reporting period, and evidence that team effectiveness improved. Capability Model references remain optional.
C9. Support for culture and values	A2 and/or A3	Reframe or combine. Use only concrete practices that show shared accountability or enable access and application. The 2027 application does not score a general claim about learning culture.
C10. Learning in the flow of work	A3. Enterprise access, participation, and application; possibly B1-B3	Reuse and expand. A3 requires two examples with distinct audiences and evidence of all four: reach, adoption, application, and outcomes. A strategically consequential example may instead become one signature contribution, but avoid duplicating evidence.
C11. Individual learning plans, pathways, curricula, and rewards	A3; possibly A2	Use selectively as supporting evidence of access, relevance, employee agency, or manager accountability. There is no stand-alone successor question, so emphasize observable use and results rather than describing features alone.

Section B: Three Signature Talent Development Contributions

2026 source	2027 destination	How to reuse or revise the work
B5. Three critical business issues, explanations, and results	B1-B3. Signature contributions	Use as the starting point for the three cases if the issues still represent the organization's most strategically consequential work. Each case now needs a complete evidence chain and the three cases must differ in need, primary audience/stakeholder, and type of contribution.
B6. Two actions connecting TD and organizational performance	B1-B3 and/or C1-C2	Move initiative-specific material into the relevant signature case. Move enterprise-wide evaluation practices or performance measures into Section C. The former choose-two list is no longer a separate scored item.
B7. Agility and pivots	Organizational learning and adaptation within B1-B3; possibly D2	Reuse implementation adjustments inside the relevant case. Use broader evidence about emerging change and preparation in D2. Avoid repeating the same pivot in both places.
C10. Most successful learning-in-the-flow initiative	B1-B3 or A3	If strategically consequential, develop it into a full signature contribution. Otherwise, use it as one of A3's two access/application examples. Add adoption, application, outcome, choice, and evaluation evidence.
C12. Succession planning strategy	A1, D2, or B1-B3 when material	No direct stand-alone equivalent. Use succession-planning content only when it demonstrates strategic alignment, future readiness, or a signature contribution with credible evidence.
C13. New or innovative initiatives	B1-B3 when selected	Newness alone is no longer the test. Reuse the initiative if it is strategically important and evidence-supported; explain why the approach fit the context, what made it distinctive or effective, and what results and learning followed.
D16 and E18 examples of measured results or efficiency	Results/evaluation elements in B1-B3; C1-C2	Reuse initiative-level metrics in the relevant case. Reserve enterprise-level measures and evaluation practices for Section C. State baselines, results, timeframes, practical significance, contribution, and limitations.

Every 2027 signature contribution must add: intended outcomes; L&D's specific role and scale; comparison with at least one reasonable alternative; evaluation strategy; practical significance; other influences and limitations; an assumption/adjustment or future practice adopted; and transferable learning.

Section C: Enterprise Measurement and Value

2026 source	2027 destination	How to reuse or revise the work
D14. Performance-management practices	C1 and/or C2 when relevant	No direct checklist equivalent. Use a practice only if it helps explain data sources, application/behavior evidence, evaluation strategy, or an organizational performance measure.
D15. Use of organizational metrics to measure learning	C2. Enterprise-level value	Use the list to identify two measures that matter most to organizational strategy. The 2027 response must show baseline, ending result, timeframe, practical significance, and credible L&D contribution across one or more initiatives.
D16. Explain two metrics and beginning/ending results	C2. Enterprise-level value	Largely reusable. Strengthen the analysis by explaining why each measure matters, L&D's contribution without overstating causation, other material influences, and the practical significance of the change.
D16b. Optional chart or graphic	Optional uploads for B1-B3	There is no separate C2 upload in the 2027 draft. A prior graphic may be adapted for a signature contribution only if it directly clarifies that case's evaluation or results, remains anonymous, fits one page, and adds no unsupported claims.
E17. Learning-function success metrics	R8. Operational efficiency measures; possibly C1	Most checklist items move to the unscored research appendix. If an operational metric materially shaped evaluation or a decision, it may also support C1.
E18. Two efficiency/cost-effectiveness measures	C1, C2, or D1 when strategically material	No direct stand-alone scored equivalent. Reuse the evidence only if it demonstrates enterprise value, informed evaluation decisions, or a consequential resource-allocation choice.
E18b. Optional chart or graphic	Optional uploads for B1-B3	No direct equivalent. Adapt only when the evidence belongs to a selected signature contribution and meets the new upload rules.
E19. Percentage of total portfolio evaluated	C1. Evaluation strategy across active work	Reuse and expand. Define what counts as an active program or initiative, then report percentages evaluated for participation/reach, learner experience, knowledge/skill change, application/behavior change, and organizational/stakeholder outcomes.
E20 and E20b. Pre-event baselines and later follow-up	C1. Evaluation strategy across active work	Reuse directly as part of the explanation of baseline practices and follow-up timing. Add data quality and how findings affect funding, redesign, continuation, or discontinuation.

Section D: Future Readiness and Strategic Judgment

2026 source	2027 destination	How to reuse or revise the work
B8. Skills-gap identification and three pressing gaps	D2. Skills strategy and future readiness	Reuse and reframe. Start with 1-2 current or emerging changes, then explain the signals used, affected workforce segments and capabilities, implications for the TD strategy, actions taken, and readiness indicators.
B8b. Preparing employees for the future of work; upskilling/reskilling	D2. Skills strategy and future readiness	Reuse and expand. Include build, buy, borrow, partner, or automate choices where relevant and progress or outcome evidence from the reporting period. Avoid a generic list of future-skills programs.
B7. Agility and pivots	D2 when enterprise-level	Use evidence that the function anticipated or responded to a consequential change. Initiative-level adjustments belong in the relevant signature contribution instead.
No direct 2026 equivalent	D1. Strategic Judgment and Resource Allocation	New work is required. Describe one consequential decision to start, expand, sustain, redesign, reduce, delay, decline, replace, or stop work. Explain evidence, stakeholder perspectives, alternatives, tradeoffs, strategic fit, resource or attention allocation, and what resulted or was learned.
Possible source material: B6, E18, or prior budget/portfolio decisions	D1. Strategic Judgment and Resource Allocation	Existing material may provide facts, but it must be recast around a genuine choice among competing uses of resources. Routine maintenance or a decision based only on budget availability is insufficient.

Unscored Profile and Research Appendix

2026 source	2027 destination	How to reuse or revise the work
F21. Formal learning delivery methods	R1. Formal learning delivery methods	Reuse directly. This item is now unscored and shown only to applicants who consent to aggregate research use.
F22. CEO/COO endorsement	No direct equivalent	Do not carry forward the endorsement as a stand-alone response. Specific leadership behaviors may support A2, but an endorsement statement alone is insufficient evidence.
F23. L&D FTE staff	P2 and R2	Reuse directly, checking that the count follows the current definition and matches the scope of the application.
F23b. Employees served	P2 and R3	Reuse directly and ensure the number aligns with the reported L&D staff and application scope.
F24. Formal learning hours per employee	R4. Formal learning hours	Reuse the figure and definition; add the calculation method and coverage for the reporting period.
F25. Formal learning expenditure per employee	R5. Learning expenditure	Reuse the figure; add inclusions, exclusions, currency, and calculation method.
F26. How learning hours and expenditure were determined	R4 and R5	Split the prior explanation between the two relevant items and make each calculation transparent.
E17. Operational metrics checklist	R8. Operational efficiency measures	Reuse directly for the retained items. Review the 2027 list carefully; it is not identical to the 2026 list.

Content That No Longer Has a Stand-Alone Scored Question

The following topics have not necessarily become irrelevant; they are no longer rewarded as isolated descriptions. Include them only when they provide evidence responsive to a 2027 question.

- General claims about learning culture or alignment with organizational values
- CEO or COO endorsement statements
- Lists of performance-management practices
- Descriptions of learning pathways, curricula, credentials, or rewards without evidence of use and outcomes
- A complete succession-planning inventory by employee level
- New or innovative initiatives described primarily because of novelty
- Efficiency metrics that are not tied to strategic value, an evaluation decision, or a consequential allocation choice

Applicant Conversion Checklist

- **Confirm that all evidence falls within July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026,** with older information used only for baselines or necessary context.
- Select three signature contributions that differ in organizational need, primary audience/stakeholder, and type of TD contribution.
- Build each case as a complete chain: need and baseline -> intended outcomes -> approach and scale -> alternatives and tradeoffs -> evaluation -> results -> contribution and limitations -> adaptation -> transferable learning.
- Consolidate evaluation material from the old Sections D and E into a single enterprise-level explanation for C1 and two strategic measures for C2.
- Replace culture and endorsement claims with observable leadership behavior and evidence of reach, adoption, application, and outcomes.
- Develop a new D1 response around one consequential resource-allocation decision.
- Reframe skills-gap and future-of-work work around emerging changes, evidence or signals, workforce implications, strategic choices, and readiness indicators.
- Remove identifying names, URLs, branded program names, named people, and identifying file names from reviewer-facing materials.
- Eliminate duplicate evidence; place each example where it most directly answers the question.