2025 BEST Awards Application Overview

**Application Instructions**

The online awards portal will open on **August 15, 2024**. Entrants do not need to be ATD members to apply. It can be accessed here:<https://atdbest.secure-platform.com:443/a/solicitations/42/home>.

1. **Applications are due on October 18, 2024.**
2. The entry fee is $300 and is payable by credit card as the last step in submitting your application online.
3. The BEST application is a **blind application**. This means your entry form should contain NO mention of the company name or any identifying programs, people, or achievements. Applications that fail to meet these criteria may be disqualified.
4. Organization name and other information will be collected separately.
5. Most answers have word limits. These are hard-coded into the form and cannot be exceeded.
6. Ensure **no company-identifying information** appears in any supporting documents or graphics you may upload. This includes the file name of the supporting document.
7. Words included in uploaded documents do not count toward the total word count for the answer.
8. **Do not include** an appendix, addendum, or any supplemental documents with your application beyond the optional uploads noted in the application. Uploads should be limited to 1-2 pages per upload.
9. **Video links or links to outside websites are not allowed**. Do not include hyperlinks in your responses. We will remove them.
10. Twelve-month reporting timeframe should be approximately from July 2023 – July 2024 (within the last year).

Disqualified applications are not eligible for a refund of the application fee.

Award winners show that they are:  
**B**uilding talent  
**E**nterprise wide and  
**S**trategically driving a  
**T**alent development culture that delivers results.

2025 BEST Awards Entry Form

(You will be asked for your company name when you submit this information to the online portal. Please enter it. It will not be visible to reviewers.)

APPLICATION NOTES:

1. When thinking about the entirety of talent development, consider whether your organization utilizes the [TD Capability Model](https://www.td.org/capability-model). If your organization incorporates any capabilities from the Model into your team’s skills development, please talk about those specific capabilities in your responses throughout the application. (e.g. question 4 may be a place where you discuss whether (or how) your talent development team uses the TD Capability Model).
2. Try and vary the examples you use throughout the application and in each of the questions.
3. When inputting metrics, be clear on the reporting timeline. You can also describe or detail year- over-year results/improvements.
4. Be sure to use updated examples from the last twelve (12) months.

COVER PAGE:

* Organization and submitter information
* Demographic information
* Consent acknowledgements

**Consent to use data for the annual ATD 2024 *State of the Industry* report**

A License to use the statistical data submitted to ATD by my organization from this ATD BEST Awards application for the purpose of computing and publishing aggregate data (from my organization and other organizations that choose to submit data) for use in the ATD 2024 *State of the Industry* report to be published by ATD in December 2024.

For the purposes of this research, ATD may not publish or distribute any data or information unique to or identifiable with my organization specifically. I understand that my organization’s data for specific questions from this application—noted below—will be used in the aggregate only when published in the 2024 ATD *State of the Industry* report: The answers to questions 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 23b, 24, 25, and information from the demographic questions page of the application.

More information on the ATD *State of the Industry* report may be found [here](https://www.td.org/soir). An infographic about last year’s ATD *State of the Industry* report is included [here](https://assets.td.org/m/6f1657d7952b283a/original/2023-SOIR-Infographic.pdf).

\_\_\_ Yes, I consent to allowing my organization’s data as outlined in the specific questions above to be included in the aggregate in ATD’s 2024 *State of the Industry* report.

\_\_\_No, I do not consent to my organization’s data to be included in the aggregate in ATD’s 2024 *State of the Industry* report.

START OF APPLICATION:

(Not scored) **Summary:** Please provide a 2-3 sentence description/synopsis of what stands out to you the most about your organization’s talent development practices over the past year. (300 words)

**Section A: Scope and Role of the Talent Development Function**

1. What is the **title** of the senior executive who has directresponsibility for enterprise-wide learning, knowledge management, or other talent development functions? (Do NOT include the person’s name.)
2. From a holistic perspective, describe the organization’s talent strategy and how it supports the overall business strategy. What specific actions does your organization take to align the talent strategy with the organization’s strategy? (e.g. Why does it matter to the business?) (500 words)
3. Explain how c-level and senior leaders support learning in the organization. (500 words)
4. Describe what members of the **talent development team** do to ensure their skills are not only up to date, but also future-ready? What type of professional development support does the TD team receive? (300 words)

**Section B: Strategic Use and Impact of the Talent Development Function**

1. Identify THREE critical business issues facing the organization and describe how talent development efforts helped to solve/address these issues. What were the results? (250 word count each text box)

Issue 1:

Issue 1 Explanation:

Issue 1 Results:

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Issue 2:

Issue 2 Explanation:

Issue 2 Results:

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Issue 3:

Issue 3 Explanation:

Issue 3 Results:

1. Choose two of the below actions that your talent development function has taken in the **last twelve (12) months** and explain how it has helped the organization reach its goals and how you measured the impact. (500 words)

* Compare the costs and benefits of a learning program
* Determine success in connecting talent development and organizational performance
* Determine success in accomplishing employee performance objectives
* Quantify the effect of specific training program(s) on business during or after the program
* Forecast the impact of specific training program(s) on business before the program is launched
* Identify strengths and weaknesses in the post-training process
* Strengthen connection between talent development and enterprise performance
* Other (please describe below)

1. When thinking about how your organization approaches agility, what talent development practices have you implemented or how have you pivoted to adjust to challenges and/or other current events, changes in technology, changes in culture, or changes in the labor market? (500 words)
2. How does the organization **identify skills gaps**? What are the three most pressing skills gaps right now for your organization and what is being done to close these gaps? (300 words)

8b. How is the talent development team working to prepare employees for the **future of work**? Are you upskilling/reskilling employees to meet these needs? (300 words)

**SECTION C: Evidence That Developing and Managing Talent Is Valued in the Organizational Culture**

1. How does the talent development function support and reflect the organization’s culture and values? (300 words)
2. Describe the organization’s most successful initiative to put learning **in the flow of work**. (For example, this could include an on-the-job training initiative, or the organization’s most successful example of delivering training to your workforce in dispersed locations.) Be sure to include any **results** it achieved. (500 words)
3. To what degree can individuals access or provide input regarding their own learning plans? (e.g. Can learners create their own learning pathways?) Are learning offerings connected or curated in progressive series, paths, career webs, or curricula, and if so, how are learners rewarded for completing these (e.g. internal certifications, recognition, or promotion consideration)? Please explain. (500 words)
4. Describe your organization’s succession planning strategy and how it applies to the following employee groups: (500 words)

* CEO
* C-Level
* Senior Leaders
* Mid-level managers
* Critical individual contributors (e.g. technical/organizational knowledge)

1. What new or **innovative** talent development initiatives have you implemented in the last twelve (12) months? (500 words)

**SECTION D: Evidence of a Link between Talent Development and Performance**

1. What performance management practices do you use? (Select all that apply.)

* Annual performance reviews
* Periodic performance discussions at least quarterly
* Documentation of individual competencies
* Individual development plans
* Employee participation in performance goal setting and self-review
* Peer review of performance or 360-degree feedback systems
* Tracking of employee learning history
* Performance improvement plans or formal programs (e.g., remedial coaching programs) to address low performers
* Tying salary increases, promotions, and/or rewards to high performance ratings
* Other (please describe below)

1. Of the following metrics that organizations use to measure the learning function’s performance, please select how your enterprise uses each metric listed below.

* Employee retention
* Employee satisfaction
* Cycle time reduction or improvement
* Quality of products/services
* Risk reduction or reduction in adverse events
* Customer satisfaction
* Market share/market expansion
* Overall profitability or progress toward mission
* Productivity improvement
* Sales/revenues
* Other – if applicable (please describe below)

You’ll select one of the following for each bullet point listed above:

1. We use this to measure the performance of learning.
2. Although we use this metric for other reasons, we do not use this to measure the performance of learning.
3. We do not collect this data.
4. From the list above, select two of the items/metrics in question 15 and explain HOW talent development initiatives contributed to results achieved in the last twelve (12) months. For EACH of the items selected, indicate beginning and ending metrics in the 12-month span. (500 words) (e.g. You might select employee retention and productivity improvement as your two examples.)

16b. \*OPTIONAL\* You may upload a single chart or one-page graphic that visualizes your answer to the above question. (Be sure it does not include any company-identifying information.)

**Section E: Evidence of Effective Measurement and Evaluation**

1. Which of the following metrics are used to measure success of the learning function? (Select all that apply.)

* Content development costs
* Content development cycle time
* Cost savings realized through outsourcing
* Cost savings realized through use of technology
* Learning hours delivered
* Lost work time for employees due to attending training
* Number of employees trained
* Time to deploy a new learning initiative
* Time to employee readiness or competence
* Timely completion of training required by law or outside body
* Travel and accommodation costs
* Whether courses are full or there are “empty seats”
* What percent of eligible employees participate in optional trainings
* Other (please describe below)

1. From the list above, select TWO (2) of your most important metrics you use from question 18 and describe the efficiencies and cost-effectiveness gained in the past twelve (12) months. For each of the items selected, **indicate your starting and ending metrics** for the past twelve (12) months. (500 words)

18b. \*OPTIONAL\* You may upload a single chart or one-page graphic that visualizes your answer to the above question. (Be sure it does not include any company-identifying information.)

1. What percentage of the programs in your total portfolio of talent development programs are evaluated?
2. For what percentage of your talent development programs (holistically) do you take pre-event measurements to establish a baseline?

20b. For what percentage of your talent development programs do you take post-event measurements three, six, twelve, or more months later?

20c. Describe any changes your organization made in the measurement and evaluation of your talent development programs to accommodate any shifts from in-person to virtual or hybrid training environments. (500 words)

**SECTION F: Talent Development Support**

1. Organizations provide development opportunities through different channels and practices. What delivery methods does your organization use for formal learning?

* Live instructor-led traditional classroom
* Live instructor-led virtual (online) classroom
* Hybrid learning (traditional and virtual classroom facilitated simultaneously)
* Blended learning (asynchronous and synchronous learning)
* Asynchronous e-learning
* Other (please explain)

1. Provide an endorsement for talent development from the CEO/COO (Do NOT use the person’s name, just title).
2. Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) talent development staff

*Includes CLO/CTDO, Learning/Training Managers, Administrative Staff, Designers, Developers, Evaluators, Performance Improvement Specialists. If this application is for a division or business unit, include only the number of staff working on behalf of that division/unit.*

23b. Number of employees served by FTE talent development staff

1. Average number of formal learning hours used per year, per employee. If tracked, what is the average time spent on all learning per employee?

*Formal learning hours are stand-alone learning hours that are NOT embedded in work or work processes (they do NOT include on-the-job learning hours). Formal learning hours may be used in-person or with the aid of technology.*

1. What is the formal learning expenditure per employee? | Learning expenditure includes all spending on: internally-provided learning (including talent development staff salaries), learning suppliers, and tuition reimbursements.

In follow-up to questions 24 and 25, please briefly explain. How do you determine this data? (300 words)

**END OF APPLICATION**