



2025 TRAINING APEX AWARDS QUALITATIVE SCORING GUIDELINES

EACH APPLICATION RECEIVES A TOTAL QUALITATIVE SCORE BETWEEN 0 AND 53. SO THE HIGHEST QUALITATIVE SCORE THAT CAN BE AWARDED IS 53. THIS SCORE IS ADDED TO THE QUANTITATIVE SCORE DERIVED BY OUR OUTSIDE RESEARCH COMPANY.

The following sections of the application are judged qualitatively:

- 2.0a Top 3 Compelling Reasons Your Organization Should Be on the 2025 Training APEX Awards List
- 2.0b Training Innovation
- 2.1 Goals
- 2.2 Training Programs Scope
- 2 Best Practice Submissions
- 1 Outstanding Training Initiative Submission
- 2.62 Training Efficiency and Effect on Organization
- 2.64 L&D Strategic Involvement
- 2.65 Executive Involvement in L&D
- 3.1 Evaluation
- 3.2 Business Metrics

Section 2.0a: Top 3 compelling reasons to be named to the Training APEX Awards List

Explain the Top 3 compelling reasons why your organization should be named to the 2025 Training APEX Awards list—what sets it apart from an employee learning and development/training perspective. The more detail/context you can provide to show why the reason is compelling, the better. Indicate any relevant challenges your company, your L&D team, or your industry faced. And provide a numerical outcome (can be an L&D outcome or a business outcome) that substantiates one of the reasons.

(0 to 1 point)

GENERIC EXAMPLES OF COMPELLING REASONS:

- Amount of investment in training/development (monetary, resources, time)
 - Strength of the linkage between business goals, training, talent development/acquisition, engagement, culture, daily operations and business outcomes/behavior change
 - Effective training initiatives that support operational efficiency and excellence
 - Successful training in response to challenges (i.e., pandemic, mergers & acquisitions, reorganization, new system implementations, supply chain issues, hybrid workforce)
 - Training's role in industry evolution/company expansion
 - Scope of training programs provided
 - Creation of custom designed/personalized/flexible training and learner experience
 - Other organizations/agencies seek to utilize training best practices your organization created
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- People-first mindset
 - Employee growth mindset
 - Strong employee value proposition
 - Plethora of employee resources
 - People-oriented mission/vision/philosophy
 - Employer of Choice/Great Place to Work
 - Continuous/lifelong learning culture
 - Learner-centric ecosystem
 - Right people in the right roles
 - Year-round development/career opportunities
 - Comprehensive employee development strategy and roadmap
 - Comprehensive talent development, recruitment, and retention processes
 - Tuition reimbursement (degree programs or certifications, licensure, etc.)
 - Focus on employee well-being
 - Focus on employee engagement
 - Recognition
 - Corporate responsibility/sustainability/community focus
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- Federated L&D governance model
 - Training team members dedicated to specific area of focus/L&D teams embedded within organizational functions
 - Senior leadership involvement/buy-in to training/champions of L&D
 - L&D's involvement in business decision-making
 - L&D's role in shaping culture

- L&D partnering with business unit leaders
- Training metrics/results reported to C-suite
- Learning transformation/consultative analysis

Scoring is as follows:

- .15 for a somewhat compelling reason
- .25 for a very compelling reason
- .25 for a numerical outcome (L&D or business) that substantiates ONE of the reasons

The difference between a somewhat compelling reason and a very compelling reason could include:

- **Scope** (affecting all employees vs. some employees/a few employees; global vs. national or national vs. regional; companywide vs. individual functions)
- **Number and level of difficulty of challenges faced in implementation**
- **Level of potential impact on the organization** (i.e., increased retention by 50 percent vs. 2 percent or increased sales by 10 percent vs. 1 percent or helped propel the organization to No. 1 in the market vs. No. 5)

Section 2.0b: Training Innovation

(0 to 3 points)

1. Provide an example of training innovation overall,
2. Provide an example of a first-time training innovation at your company
3. Provide an example of a training innovation you pioneered in your industry

AND for each one, provide a numerical L&D/training OR business outcome

It can be innovation from a training delivery, content creation, or facilitation standpoint; innovatively solving a problem/challenge with training; innovation in technology; innovation in training organizational strategy, evaluation method, tracking training, communicating with learners/determining learner preferences, etc. Innovation can be something new that blows your socks off or a creative way of using something that's been around for a while. Innovation can be found in new training models/systems/processes. It can be found in new technologies. It can be found in cutting-edge research. It can be found in a new understanding of how people learn. Innovation also can be doing something in training that no one else in your industry is doing or something your company has never done before. **Think of it this way: What would make you say, "Wow! My organization needs to be doing this!" if you read it in the application?**

(These innovation criteria also apply to the Best Practice and Outstanding Training Initiative submissions.)

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATION

- Maximizing training technologies during acquisitions
- Changing delivery methods/utilizing new technologies
- Idea generation/hackathons
- Fostering a culture with no fear of failure/turning failure into learning lessons
- Implementation of new training programs never tried before (i.e., apprenticeship, virtual onboarding, AI coaching, etc.)
- Use of Lean, Six Sigma, Agile, etc., principles to spark training innovation and cost savings
- Applying innovations from other industries to training/L&D
- New applications for training technologies/processes
- Use of neuroscience and other scientific research applied to learning, retention, etc.
- Shifting the culture
- New L&D roles/areas of expertise

Scoring is as follows:

- .25 point for somewhat innovative
- .5 point for very innovative
- .75 point for incredibly innovative

- .25 point for including a numerical outcome (can be an L&D/training OR business outcome) for each example

Somewhat innovative: Judge thinks: I've seen/heard this done before (maybe even in my own organization), but it does have some element of innovation, with room to elevate it more.

Very innovative: Judge thinks: I've seen/heard this done before (maybe even in my own organization), but this has a new twist or has been implemented very effectively.

Incredibly innovative: Judge thinks: Wow! I never thought of/saw this done. My organization needs to be doing this!

Section 2.1: Training's Linkage to Business or Business Unit Goals and Demonstrated Effectiveness

(0 to 3 points)

Identify 3 specific, measurable, **numerical (quantifiable)** business or business unit (**not L&D**) goals set by senior leadership that the organization set out to achieve in the last year. For each goal, identify a specific training program and explain how it helped to meet the goal, and provide a **numerical (quantifiable)** Level 3 (behavior change—as seen by a third party such as a manager, direct report, colleague, or customer/patient; NOT self-reported) or Level 4 (business impact—i.e., sales/revenue increase, market share increase, customer satisfaction score improvement, employee productivity

increase, employee retention improvement or turnover reduction, increased promotions, decreased safety violations, improved employee health/wellness, improved net promoter score, etc.) result showing the training was effective. To achieve full credit, the results must tie back to the business goal.

Business goals typically fall into four categories:

Client Services: Pertaining to the products/services the company is providing

Business Development: Pertaining to expansion, including geographic, into new industries, etc.

Operations: Pertaining to running the business more efficiently/effectively

Talent: Pertaining to employee retention, engagement, performance, management, etc.

An example of a specific and measurable goal would be:

Expand our global footprint by opening 200 new stores in the next two years.

Scoring is as follows for EACH goal:

- .25 point is awarded for identifying a SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, NUMERICAL (QUANTIFIABLE) business goal the company aimed to achieve (**Note that it is a business or business unit goal, NOT an L&D goal, and that points will only be awarded for *specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) goals*.**)
- .25 point is awarded for describing a particular training program that aimed to help achieve the business goal.
- .5 point is awarded for providing specific numerical (quantifiable) Kirkpatrick Level 3 (behavior change—as seen by a third party such as a manager, direct report, colleague, or customer/patient; NOT self-reported) or Level 4 (business impact) results for the goal AND the results tie back to the business goal. (**Points will *not* be awarded for results that don't tie back to the original business goal—i.e., if the business goal is to increase sales 10%, but the results are that retention increased by 15%, points will not be awarded for results.**)

Section 2.2: Individual Training Programs' Role/Results in Achieving Strategic Business or Business Unit Goals (0 to 10 points)

Detail an example of a specific training program related to each category, indicate linkage to a SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, NUMERICAL (QUANTIFIABLE) business or business unit goal (**it does NOT have to be one of the three goals listed in Section 2.1**) relevant to the particular training category, and finish off with specific numerical Level 3 (validated by a third party) and/or Level 4 results demonstrating the program's effectiveness that tie back to the specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) business goal. This should be done for each of the program sections.

Scoring is as follows for EACH of the 20 training types (.5 point for each):

- .10 point is awarded for detailing a specific training program.
- .10 point is awarded for identifying a SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, NUMERICAL (QUANTIFIABLE) business or business unit goal relevant to the particular training category that the company aimed to achieve. **(Note that it is a business goal or business unit goal, NOT an L&D goal, and that points will only be rewarded for specific, measurable goals that relate to the specific category.** The goal *can* be one noted in Section 2.1 OR it can be a completely different business goal.)
- .30 point is awarded for providing specific numerical (quantifiable) Kirkpatrick Level 3 (behavior change—as seen by a third party such as a manager, direct report, colleague, or customer/patient; NOT self-reported) or Level 4 (business impact) results that tie back to the corporate goal. **(Points will *not* be awarded for results that don't tie back to the original business goal—i.e., if the business goal is to increase sales 10%, but the results are that retention increased by 15%, points will not be awarded for results.)**

Best Practice Entry 1 (0 to 5 points)

Best Practice Entry 2 (0 to 5 points)

Define the program scope; use of training to achieve a specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) overall business or business unit goal (either one identified in Section 2.1 or a different one); innovation, reinforcement; senior leadership involvement, and demonstrable numerical Level 3 (behavior change) or Level 4 (business impact) results tied back to the specific numerical business goal.

NOTE: If no specific results (i.e., 10 percent reduction in customer complaints—NOT customer complaints were reduced) are provided, the submission cannot earn 5 points.

Scoring is as follows:

- **Program scope (1 point) divided as follows:**

—Up to .5 point for the percentage of the workforce trained with the program

Scoring is as follows:

.5 for 25% or more of the workforce trained with the program

.25 for 5-24.9%

.15 for less than 5%

—Up to .5 point for the number of business units that had employees trained with this program

Scoring is as follows:

.5 for employees in more than 3 business units trained with the program

.25 for 1 to 3 business units

Business/business unit goal (1 point):

— .5 point is awarded for listing the overall business or business unit goal
— .5 point for the goal being specific, measurable, and numerical (quantifiable) and relevant to the best practice (the goal can be one noted in Section 2.1 OR a different business goal).

- **Innovation (1 point):** .25 to 1 point is awarded for innovation from an overall training perspective OR for innovation in terms of something in training a company has done for the first time OR for innovation in terms of training that no one else in the applicant's industry is doing. (Please see the Innovation section for more details on what constitutes innovation; even if the innovation explanation is detailed in section 2.0b, please repeat it in the Best Practice submission)
- **Reinforcement (.5 point):**
 - .25 point is awarded for description of short-term reinforcement methods provided for up to 6 months after training
 - .25 point for long-term reinforcement (more than 6 months after the training)
- **Senior leadership involvement (.5 point):**
 - .25 point is awarded if senior leaders (either C-suite or business unit executives—NOT Training or L&D execs) are involved in the design, development, or marketing of the program
 - .25 point if senior leaders (either C-suite or business unit executives—NOT L&D execs) are involved in the facilitation of the program (can be teaching a program or a session in a program in person or virtually; recording a video for a program; serving as a mentor; or reviewing a capstone project)

NOTE: The title of the executive involved MUST be provided in both cases, along with details on the specific role they played.
- **Level 3 (behavior change) AND 4 (business impact) results (1 point):** .5 point is awarded for specific, numerical (quantifiable) Level 3 (behavior change as validated by a third party) results AND .5 point is awarded for specific, numerical (quantifiable) Level 4 (business impact) results as defined above **(in both cases, results must tie back to the original measurable business or business unit goal).**

NOTE: On the qualitative scorecard, judges will check the appropriate box for entries they believe should be considered for a separate Best Practice award (must achieve a 5-point score to qualify).

Outstanding Training Initiative (0 to 5 points)

Define the project scope; use of training to achieve a specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) business or business unit strategic goal; innovation; reinforcement; senior leadership involvement; and demonstrable numerical (quantifiable) Level 3 (behavior change) OR Level 4 (business impact) results that tie back to the specific numerical business or business unit goal.

Scoring is as follows:

- **Program scope (1 point) divided as follows:**
 - Up to .5 point for the percentage of the workforce trained with the program.**Scoring is as follows:**
 - .5 for 5% or more of the workforce trained with the program
 - .25 for 1-4.9%
 - .15 for less than 1%
 - Up to .5 point for the number of business units that had employees trained with this program**Scoring is as follows:**
 - .5 for employees in more than 1 business unit trained with the program
 - .25 for 1 business unit
- **Business/business unit goal (1 point):**
 - .5 point is awarded for listing the overall business or business unit goal
 - .5 point for the goal being specific, measurable, and numerical (quantifiable) and relevant to the outstanding training initiative (the goal can be one noted in Section 2.1 OR a different business goal).
- **Innovation (1 point):** .25 to 1 point is awarded for innovation from an overall training perspective OR for innovation in terms of something in training a company has done for the first time OR for innovation in terms of training that no one else in the applicant's industry is doing. (Please see the Innovation section for more details on what constitutes innovation; even if the innovation explanation is detailed in section 2.0b, please repeat it in the Outstanding Training Initiative submission.)
 - Reinforcement (.5 point):**
 - .25 point is awarded for description of short-term reinforcement methods provided for up to 6 months after training
 - .25 point for long-term reinforcement (more than 6 months after the training)
- **Senior leadership involvement (.5 point):**
 - .25 point is awarded if senior leaders (either C-suite or business unit executives—NOT Training or L&D execs) are involved in the design, development, or marketing of the program
 - .25 point if senior leaders (either C-suite or business unit executives—NOT L&D execs) are involved in the facilitation of the program (can be teaching a program or a session in a program in person or virtually; recording a video for a program; serving as a mentor; or reviewing a capstone project)

NOTE: The title of the executive involved MUST be provided in both cases, along with details on the specific role they played.
- **Level 3 (behavior change) OR 4 (business impact) results (1 point):** 1 point is awarded for specific, numerical (quantifiable) Level 3 (behavior change) AND/OR specific, numerical (quantifiable) Level 4 (business impact) results as defined above (**in either case, results must tie back to the original numerical business or business unit goal**).

NOTE: On the scorecard, judges will check the appropriate box for entries they believe should be considered for a separate Outstanding Training Initiative award (must achieve a 5-point score to qualify).

NOTE: Applicants cannot use the same program example for a Best Practice submission and the Outstanding Training Initiative submission—they must be different.)

Section 2.62: Training Efficiency and Effect on Organization (0 to 2 points)

Scoring is as follows:

Project Scope (1 point):

- .5 point is awarded for listing the number of learners affected.
- .5 is awarded for detailing the portions of the company that reaped the benefit of the efficiency (i.e., entire company, multiple business units/functions/departments, single business unit/function/department).

Business Impact: (1 point)

- 1 is awarded point for detailing the specific business impact (i.e., \$XX saved in travel costs; XX hours saved; X% increase in productivity; XX additional employees trained).

Section 2.64: L&D Governance Model and L&D's Role in Enabling the Business Strategy (0 to 4 points)

Scoring is as follows:

- .25 point is awarded for describing the L&D/Training reporting structure (including number of L&D/Training people involved)
- .25 is awarded for describing the L&D governance model.
- .5 point is rewarded for giving an example of how the model works successfully (please detail a specific program that resulted from L&D working with senior leadership).
- .5 point is awarded for a member of the L&D/Training team (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE) being a member of the senior executive team. (Note: This could be the CHRO if L&D reports to that function).
- .5 point is awarded for at least one L&D member (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE OR TITLES) meeting regularly with *the senior executive team* (PROVIDE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TITLES AND THE MEETING FREQUENCY—i.e., weekly, monthly, quarterly).

- .5 point is awarded for at least one L&D member (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE OR TITLES) meeting regularly with *business unit leaders* (PROVIDE THE BUSINESS UNIT LEADER'S TITLE AND THE MEETING FREQUENCY—i.e., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly).
- .5 point is awarded for at least one L&D member (PROVIDE TITLE OR TITLES) participating in the organization's setting of annual corporate strategic goals.
- 1 point is awarded for an example of a training program that was created based on L&D's involvement in the organization's setting of annual strategic business goals. **NOTE: You must include details of the program, not just name it.**

Section 2.65: Involvement of Senior Leadership in Training/L&D Initiatives (0 to 4 points)

1 point is awarded for a specific EXAMPLE for each of the following:

- Top executives (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE OR TITLES—**these are NOT L&D executives**) are involved in training strategy meetings or training program kickoffs (PROVIDE DETAILS ON THE MEETINGS/TRAINING).
- Top executives (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE OR TITLES—**these are NOT L&D executives**) champion L&D initiatives at in-person events such as Town Halls or other company events OR record talks or videos on the importance of L&D initiatives (PROVIDE SPECIFICS).
- Top executives (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE OR TITLES—**these are NOT L&D executives**) serve as subject matter experts for training programs (PROVIDE PROGRAM NAME AND AN EXAMPLE OF THE CONTENT THE SENIOR EXECs PROVIDE).
- Top executives (PROVIDE THEIR TITLE OR TITLES—**these are NOT L&D executives**) facilitate training courses or record course videos (PROVIDE COURSE NAME).

Section 3.1: Evaluation Results and Effectiveness (0 to 4 points)

Demonstrate what the organization is doing when it comes to evaluation and provide specific, numerical (quantifiable) examples showing its evaluation methods are successful based on demonstrated results.

Scoring is as follows:

Kirkpatrick Level 1 (.25 point total):

- .10 point is awarded for describing the overall evaluation method used.
- .15 point is awarded for providing an example of a specific, numerical (quantifiable) evaluation result that demonstrates the training was effective (i.e., for instructor effectiveness, learners gave Sales Training 101 a 4.6 score on a scale of 1-5 in 2024).

Kirkpatrick Level 2 (.25 point total):

- .10 point is awarded for describing the overall evaluation method used.
- .15 point is awarded for providing an example of a specific, numerical (quantifiable) evaluation result that demonstrates a particular training program was effective (i.e., 95% of 150 learners who took the Teller Certification program passed the final exam in 2024).

All other evaluation methods are worth .5 point as follows:

- .25 point is awarded for describing the overall evaluation method used.
- .25 point is awarded for providing an example of a specific, numerical (quantifiable) evaluation result that demonstrates a particular training program was effective.

NOTE: The first text field in each evaluation category should be an overview of how you use that particular method to evaluate each training program you implement (in particular, the criteria you use—what you are evaluating the program against). It should NOT talk about individual program examples. The second text field is where you describe how you evaluated a specific program and what numerical evaluation result was achieved.

**Section 3.2: Demonstrated Measurable Training Results as Determined by Business Metrics
(0 to 7 points)**

The business metrics should directly correlate to the specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) business or business unit goals outlined in Section 2.1 or other specific business or business unit goals. **The goal MUST be relevant to the metric category indicated (i.e., don't provide a safety goal for the revenue category).** Provide specific numerical (quantifiable) Level 4 (business impact) results demonstrating training's effectiveness. **NOTE: Level 3 (behavior change) results do NOT qualify for this section.** Only those entries that include specific numerical (quantifiable) results that tie back to their respective business or business unit goals for ALL the categories will achieve a 7 score here.

Scoring is as follows for EACH metric:

- .10 point should be awarded for identifying the specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) business or business unit goal the company aimed to achieve **(Note that it is a business or business unit goal, NOT an L&D goal, and that points will only be awarded for *specific, measurable, numerical (quantifiable) goals*). The goal MUST be relevant to the category indicated (i.e., don't provide a safety goal for the revenue category).**
- .15 point should be awarded for identifying a particular training program that aimed to help achieve the business or business unit goal.

- .25 point should be awarded for detailing specific numerical (quantifiable) Kirkpatrick Level 4 (business impact) results that a particular training program achieved in relation to the specific business or business unit goal/expectation. **(Points will *not* be awarded for results that don't tie back to the specific metric category AND the original business goal—i.e., if the business goal is to increase sales 10%, but the results are that retention increased by 15%, points will not be awarded for results.)**