



IMC RAMKRISHNA BAJAJ NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD



SME

SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE ENTERPRISES

Criteria for
Performance Excellence



Ramkrishna Bajaj
(1923-1994)

The younger son of Jamnalal and Jankidevi Bajaj, Ramkrishna was essentially a product of the freedom movement. Brought up under the personal guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Vinobha Bhave since his childhood, he

participated in the freedom struggle and spent more than three years in jail.

He became the Head of the Bajaj Group after the passing away of his elder brother, Kamalnayan Bajaj. He was more of a business leader than a businessman. For him, being a part of the nation-building process was as important as running his business. Concerned about morality in public life, he concentrated on making businessmen aware of the need to fulfil their larger social responsibilities. He was also known for his deep involvement in social work and philanthropy.

Apart from his socio-economic activities at the national and international levels, he established various foundations and institutions for promoting social welfare and Gandhian constructive activities. He was particularly concerned with ethics in business, business self-regulation, and consumer welfare. He was the President of FICCI, Indian National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce and IMC. He was the Chairman and Founder of various industry and trade organizations such as the Council for Fair Business Practices and the National Center for Quality Management

LETTER FROM THE
CHAIRMAN:
IMC Ramkrishna Bajaj
National Quality Award Trust



Welcome to the IMC Ramkrishna Bajaj National Quality Award (IMC RBNQA) SME Excellence Framework.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in creating jobs, driving innovation and supporting economic growth. To succeed in today's competitive market, businesses need strong leadership, satisfied customers, capable employees and efficient operations.

The IMC RBNQA SME Excellence Framework is a simple and practical guide to help businesses improve the way they work. It helps organizations review their current practices, identify opportunities for improvement and achieve better business results.

The framework focuses on leadership, strategy, customers, people, operations and results. It encourages continuous improvement and provides a roadmap for sustainable growth.

Whether your business is just starting or well established, this framework can help you become stronger, more competitive and better prepared for the future.

Excellence is not about being perfect. It is about improving every day.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Niraj Bajaj', written in a cursive style.

Niraj Bajaj
Chairman, IMC RBNQA Trust

LETTER FROM THE
DIRECTOR:
BUSINESS EXCELLENCE
IMC RBNQA Trust



Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the IMC Ramkrishna Bajaj National Quality Award (IMC RBNQA) SME Excellence Framework.

Many successful businesses have one thing in common—they keep learning, improving and listening to their customers.

This framework has been designed to help SMEs understand their strengths, identify areas for improvement and build better systems for long-term success. It is not just for winning an award; it is a practical tool to help your business grow.

You do not need complex processes or technical language to use this framework. Simply describe how your business operates, the improvements you have made and the results you have achieved.

Every business has strengths and every business has opportunities to improve. The important thing is to keep moving forward.

I hope this framework helps you build a stronger business, satisfy your customers and achieve sustainable growth.

I wish you and your team every success on your excellence journey.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shailesh Ghodekar'.

Shailesh Ghodekar

Director - Business Excellence, IMC RBNQA Trust

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1.1 About IMC RBNQA

The IMC Ramkrishna Bajaj National Quality Award (IMC RBNQA) is one of India's leading frameworks for business excellence.

For over three decades, it has helped organizations improve performance, strengthen leadership and achieve sustainable growth. The IMC RBNQA SME Excellence Framework has been specially developed to meet the needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

It provides a simple and practical way for businesses to assess how they work, identify opportunities for improvement and achieve better results.

1.2 Purpose of the SME Excellence Framework

The purpose of this framework is to help SMEs build a stronger and more successful business.

It encourages businesses to improve leadership, planning, customer satisfaction, employee involvement, operations and overall performance. It also helps identify strengths, address gaps and drive continuous improvement.

1.3 Benefits of Using the Framework

The framework helps SMEs:

- Improve leadership and decision-making
- Set clear business goals and priorities
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Build an engaged and skilled workforce
- Improve quality, productivity and efficiency
- Encourage innovation and continuous improvement
- Manage risks more effectively
- Improve business performance and profitability
- Learn from good practices
- Achieve sustainable growth

1.4 Who Can Use the Framework

The framework is suitable for:

- Small and medium manufacturing businesses
- Family-owned businesses
- Start-ups and growing enterprises
- Contract manufacturers
- Component manufacturers
- Process and discrete manufacturing units

It can be used by businesses at any stage of growth.



Point Values by Categories & Items

Category & Item	Points
1 Leadership	120
1.1 Leadership and Business Culture	[70]
1.2 Ethics, Compliance and Social Responsibility	[50]
2 Strategy	85
2.1 Planning for Growth	[45]
2.2 Execution and Review	[40]
3 Customers	85
3.1 Understanding Customers and Market	[40]
3.2 Customer Relationship and Satisfaction	[45]
4 Performance and Digital Tools	90
4.1 Performance Measurement and Improvement	[45]
4.2 Information and Digital Tools	[45]
5 Workforce	85
5.1 Workforce Capability and Workplace Environment	[40]
5.2 Workforce Engagement and Development	[45]
6 Operations	85
6.1 Operational Excellence	[45]
6.2 Continuous Improvement	[40]
7 Organizational Results	450
7.1 Business	[120]
7.2 Customer	[100]
7.3 Workforce	[100]
7.4 Operational	[100]
7.5 Community	[30]
TOTAL POINTS	1000

1 Leadership (120 points)**1.1 Leadership and Business Culture (70 Points)**

Purpose

This item examines how leaders set the direction for the business, build the right culture, involve employees and focus on customers to achieve better results.

a. Business Direction and Culture

1. How the Mission, Vision and Values are shared with employees
2. How leaders promote quality, customer focus, ethics and teamwork
3. How employees are encouraged to share ideas and solve problems

b. Communication and Involvement

1. How leaders communicate with employees, customers and other stakeholders
2. How feedback is collected and used
3. How important business decisions and priorities are shared

1.2 Ethics, Compliance and Social Responsibility (50 Points)**Purpose**

This item examines how the business follows ethical practices, complies with laws and regulations, manages risks and contributes to society.

a. Ethics and Compliance

1. How the business promotes honesty and ethical behaviour
2. How it complies with legal and regulatory requirements

b. Social Responsibility

1. How the business supports the community
2. How it contributes to safety, the environment and sustainable practices

2 Strategy (85 points)

2.1 Planning for Growth (45 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business plans for the future, identifies opportunities and prepares for growth.

1. What are your business goals
2. How do you understand customer needs, market trends and competition
3. How do you identify new business opportunities and possible risks

2.2 Execution and Review (40 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business puts its plans into action, tracks progress and makes improvements when needed.

1. How business plans are converted into actions and progress is reviewed
2. How people and resources are assigned
3. How changes are made when business needs or market conditions change

Making Quality Happen

3 Customers (85 points)

3.1 Understanding Customers and Markets (40 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business understands its customers and identifies market opportunities.

1. How customer feedback is collected & information is used to improve products and services
2. How customer needs and expectations are understood
3. How market trends and competitors are monitored

3.2 Customer Relationships and Satisfaction (45 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business builds strong customer relationships and keeps customers satisfied.

1. How new customers are acquired and existing customers are retained
2. How customer satisfaction is measured
3. How complaints and feedback are handled

4 Performance and Digital Tools (90 points)

4.1 Performance Measurement and Improvement (45 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business measures its performance and uses the information to improve.

1. How do you measure performance of your business
2. How improvement opportunities are identified and acted upon

4.2 Information and Digital Tools (45 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business uses information, knowledge and technology to improve performance.

1. How do you store and protect important business information
2. How do you share information and good practices with your employees
3. How digital tools and technology are used to improve work and serve customers better

5 Workforce (85 points)

5.1 Workforce Capability and Workplace Environment (40 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business attracts, develops and supports its employees.

1. How employees are recruited and retained
2. How skills and capabilities are developed
3. How a safe and healthy workplace is maintained

5.2 Workforce Engagement and Development (45 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business motivates, recognizes and develops its employees.

1. How employees are engaged and involved
2. How performance is reviewed
3. How good work is recognized

6 Operations (85 points)

6.1 Operational Excellence (45 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business delivers quality products and services and improves its day-to-day operations.

1. How employees are engaged and involved
2. How performance is reviewed
3. How good work is recognized

6.2 Continuous Improvement (40 Points)

Purpose

This item examines how the business improves, introduces new ideas and prepares for unexpected situations.

1. How do you identify opportunities for improvement
2. How do you encourage new ideas
3. How business risks are managed & continues to operate during disruptions

7 Results (450 points)

Purpose

This category examines the results achieved by the business and whether its efforts are leading to better performance, satisfied customers, engaged employees and sustainable growth.

For important results, provide:

- Current performance
- Three-year trend (where available)
- Targets
- Benchmark or comparison (if available)

7.1 Business Results (120 Points)

- a. Sales or revenue growth
- b. Profitability
- c. Business growth

7.2 Customer Results (100 Points)

- a. Customer satisfaction
- b. Customer complaints
- c. New customers acquired

7.3 Workforce Results (100 Points)

- a. Employee engagement
- b. Employee satisfaction
- c. Employee retention
- d. Employee suggestions and participation

7.4 Operational Results (100 Points)

- a. Product or service quality
- b. Productivity
- c. On-time delivery
- d. Cost savings
- e. Digital initiatives

7.5 Community Results (30 Points)

- a. Community initiatives
- b. Environmental improvements
- c. Safety initiatives

There is no fixed format for answering the questions in this framework. Keep your responses simple, practical and based on how your business actually operates.

For each question, try to cover the following:

- *What do you do?*
- *How do you do it?*
- *Who is responsible?*
- *How often do you review it?*
- *What improvements or results have you achieved?*

Examples with Sample Response

2.1.3 : How do you identify new business opportunities and possible risks?

We regularly talk to customers, monitor market trends and review competitor activities to identify new business opportunities. We also discuss ideas with our sales and production teams.

Possible risks such as raw material shortages, machine breakdowns, quality issues, changes in customer demand and regulatory requirements are reviewed during monthly management meetings. Based on these discussions, we take preventive actions and prepare plans to reduce the impact on the business.

3.1.1 How customer feedback is collected

We collect customer feedback through phone calls, WhatsApp messages and direct meetings. The Sales Manager reviews the feedback every month and shares it with the team. Based on customer suggestions, we improved our packaging and reduced delivery complaints.”

4.1.1 How do you review your business performance?

Every month, we review important business measures such as sales, production, quality, customer complaints and delivery performance. The business owner and department heads discuss the results, identify any issues and decide on actions for improvement. Progress is reviewed in the next meeting to ensure the actions have been completed.

6.1.1 How products and services are designed and delivered

We understand customer requirements before starting production. Products are made according to approved specifications and checked for quality at different stages. Orders are packed and dispatched as per the customer’s delivery schedule. Customer feedback is reviewed regularly to improve our products and services.

Results show whether your efforts are helping your business improve.

For each result, try to provide:

- *What is your current performance?*
- *How has it changed over the last 2–3 years?*
- *What is your target or goal?*
- *If available, how does it compare with competitors or industry standards*

Example with Sample Response

7.2 Customer Results

a) Customer complaints

1. **Current performance:**

18 complaints in 2026

2. **Performance over the last 3 years:**

Year	Number of Complaints
2022	35
2023	25
2024	18

3. **Target:**

Reduce complaints to fewer than 15 per year.

4. **Comparison:**

Better than last year and lower than the industry average which is 20 complaint.

7.3 Workforce Results – Employee Engagement

a) What do you measure?

Employee engagement (through attendance, participation, feedback or surveys).

b) Current performance:

90% employee participation in monthly meetings and improvement activities.

c) Performance over the last 3 years:

Year	Employee Engagement
2022	78%
2023	84%
2024	90%

d) Target:

Achieve 95% employee participation.

e) Comparison (if available):

Improved compared to previous years and better than the company target of 85%.

Keep your information simple, factual and supported by available records wherever possible.

The IMC RBNQA SME Excellence Framework evaluates both how your business operates (Processes) and what your business achieves (Results).

A. How We Evaluate Your Processes

We evaluate how your business works on a day-to-day basis. We look at whether you have a clear way of working, whether it is followed consistently, reviewed regularly and improved over time.

Process Scoring Guidelines

Score	What it Means
0%	No process or evidence available.
25%	A basic process exists but is informal and followed inconsistently.
50%	The process is defined and generally followed. Some improvements are evident.
65%	The process is working well, followed across the business and reviewed regularly. Good evidence of improvements is available.
75%	The process is well established, consistently implemented and supports business objectives. Several improvements have been made.
85%	The process is mature, regularly improved and delivering clear business benefits. Employees are actively involved.
100%	The process is fully embedded, continuously improved and represents a best practice for the business.

B. How We Evaluate Your Results

We also evaluate the results your business has achieved.

We look at your current performance, improvement over time, achievement of targets and, where available, comparisons with previous years, competitors or industry benchmarks.

Results Scoring Guidelines

Score	What it Means
0%	No results or performance data available.
25%	Limited results are available with little or no improvement.
50%	Key results are measured and show some improvement.
65%	Good results with positive trends. Most targets are achieved.
75%	Strong results across key business areas with consistent improvement.
85%	Excellent results with sustained improvement, target achievement and favourable comparisons, where available.
100%	Outstanding results sustained over time and demonstrating leading business performance.

Final Assessment

The final score is based on both Processes and Results.

Good processes help deliver good results. Strong results are more sustainable when they are supported by clear and consistent ways of working.

The purpose of this assessment is not only to recognize good businesses, but also to help organizations identify opportunities for improvement, strengthen their capabilities and achieve sustainable growth.

7.1 Eligibility

The IMC RBNQA SME Excellence Framework is open to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that are committed to improving their business performance.

To apply, the business should:

- Be in operation for at least three years
- Have basic management systems and records
- Be willing to share information required for the assessment
- Participate in the assessment and site visit, if selected

The IMC RBNQA Trust may revise the eligibility criteria from time to time.

7.2 Application Process

The application process consists of five simple steps:

Step 1: Submit the Eligibility Form

Step 2: Submit the Application Report

Step 3: Assessment by trained examiners

Step 4: Site Visit (for shortlisted organizations)

Step 5: Final review and announcement of awards

Applicants should ensure that the information provided is complete and supported by relevant evidence.

7.3 Preparing the Application Report

The Application Report should clearly explain how your business operates and the results it has achieved.

Your report should:

- Answer all relevant questions in the framework
- Provide factual information and supporting evidence
- Describe your business practices
- Present important business results
- Highlight key improvements and achievements
- Use tables, charts or photographs, wherever useful

The objective is to present a clear picture of your business, not to prepare a lengthy report.

7.4 Assessment Process

The assessment focuses on both organizational practices and results using the IMC RBNQA assessment methodology. Each application is evaluated by a team of trained and qualified examiners.

The assessment process includes:

- Independent review of the application report
- Consensus review by the examiner team
- Identification of strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Development of assessment findings
- Recommendation for site visit assessment, where applicable

Throughout the process, examiners maintain strict confidentiality, objectivity and professionalism

7.5 Site Visit

The purpose of the visit is to:

- Understand how the business operates
- Verify the information provided in the application
- Meet business leaders and employees
- Observe key business processes
- Clarify any questions

The site visit is not an inspection or audit. It helps the examiners carry out a fair and balanced assessment.

7.6 Feedback Report

One of the most valuable outcomes of participation is the Feedback Report. Every participating business receives a Feedback Report.

The report highlights:

- Business strengths
- Opportunities for improvement
- Good practices observed
- Suggestions for future improvement

The Feedback Report is intended to help businesses improve and grow.

7.7 Recognition and Awards

Businesses demonstrating excellence may receive recognition based on their overall assessment score.

Recognition levels may include:

- IMC RBNQA Trophy
- Performance Excellence Trophy
- Certificate of Merit
- Commendation Certificate





Chamber of Commerce and Industry

IMC Ramkrishna Bajaj National Quality Award Trust

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