



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Dione Geiger, The Sterling Council

DGeiger@thesterlingcouncil.org or (850) 251-5873

Three Organizations Honored with Governor's Sterling and Georgia Oglethorpe Awards

~ The Sterling Council Honors Florida and Georgia Role Model Organizations~

Tallahassee, FL – (April 28, 2026) – Today, the Sterling Council is pleased to announce the 2026 Recipients of the prestigious Sterling Award. This year, two exceptional organizations are recipients of the Georgia Oglethorpe Award and one is the recipient of the Sterling Sustained Excellence Award. These honorees will be formally recognized on May 29, 2026, at the JW Marriott Bonnet Creek in Orlando to celebrate their accomplishments and attainment of this recognition.

The Sterling Council is the premier resource for leadership performance and business excellence in the southeast. The recognized award process elevates organizations in ways no other system can. The extensive corps of Sterling performance excellence professionals, which includes more than 100 examiners and a 40-member Board of Directors, maintains exceptionally high standards and saves organizations, as well as the state, millions of dollars annually.

GEORGIA OGLETHORPE AWARD

Fulton County Schools Human Resources Division

2026 Sterling Award Recipient

Fulton County Schools Human Resources Division serves more than 13,000 employees and over 86,000 students across Georgia's fourth largest school system, functioning as a strategic partner to district and school leadership across recruitment and retention, employee relations, leadership development, compensation, workforce planning, and organizational effectiveness. The division has driven measurable results through disciplined continuous improvement reducing onboarding time from 34 to 15 days over the past three years, sustaining district-wide retention for school based certified staff teacher retention from 87.8% to 89.5% exceeding the industry top quartile, and building leadership pipelines that develop mission-aligned talent at every level. Underpinning this work is the Level Up professional development program, which strengthens HR capabilities and grows future-ready leaders, reflecting a culture of shared accountability in which investing in people and delivering excellent service to schools are treated as inseparable goals.

Fulton County Schools Human Resources Division is the first education organization in Georgia to be recognized as a Georgia Oglethorpe recipient.

GEORGIA OGLETHORPE AWARD
Northeast Georgia Medical Center Braselton
2026 Sterling Award Recipient

Northeast Georgia Medical Center Braselton is a 236-bed hospital and part of Northeast Georgia Health System, a non-profit network whose mission is improving the health of the community in all it does. The Braselton campus offers a comprehensive range of inpatient and outpatient services — including emergency care, intensive care, labor and delivery, a Level II neonatal intensive care unit, and interventional cardiac catheterization and surgical services across seven operating rooms. Guided by a high-performance leadership system, the hospital has achieved clinical outcomes that consistently exceed national benchmarks, including sepsis bundle compliance, and has maintained patient experience ratings above the national benchmark of 68% for both “recommend” and “rate the hospital” measures for five consecutive years. These accomplishments are a testament to its sustained commitment to quality care and community trust.

Northeast Georgia Medical Center Braselton is the first hospital from Northeast Georgia Health System to win the Georgia Oglethorpe Award.

STERLING SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE AWARD

Alachua County Tax Collector’s Office
2026 Sterling Award Recipient

The Alachua County Tax Collector's Office (ACTC) has spent more than a decade building one of Florida's most recognized government organizations not by accident, but through disciplined leadership and a comprehensive management system grounded in the Florida Sterling Criteria for Performance Excellence. That system integrates strategic planning, performance measurement, workforce development, and transparent communication into a single, aligned approach that touches every level of the organization. The results speak for themselves: sustained customer satisfaction of 97%, industry-leading practices in real-time feedback and data-driven performance management, and statewide recognition as a benchmark organization in the tax collector community. Guided by its values of Respect, Excellence, Service, Professionalism, Enjoyment, Compassion, and Teamwork (RESPECT) and an unwavering commitment to integrity, innovation, and fiscal responsibility, ACTC has made excellence in public service not as an aspiration but an operating standard.

Alachua County Tax Collector was recognized as a Governor’s Sterling Award recipient in 2022, now being recognized as a two-time Sterling Award recipient.

About The Sterling Council:

The Sterling Council, established in 1992, is a public/private not-for-profit corporation supported by the Executive Office of the Governor. The Council oversees the Governor’s Sterling Award for Performance Excellence and the Georgia Oglethorpe Award, which is based on the national Malcolm Baldrige Award, with Awards being presented annually to high performing, role-model organizations, both private and public, who demonstrate superior management approaches and role model results. Sterling’s annual conference teaches participants how to elevate performance and increase productivity. Nearly 600 executives and professionals gather yearly at this event for a one-stop source for education, information, and inspiration. The conference concludes with the recognition of best practices, the Team Showcase Champion, and the presentation of Sterling, Oglethorpe, and Manufacturing Business Excellence Awards. For more information, please contact Dione Geiger at (850) 922-5316 or visit www.thesterlingcouncil.org.