

Dione Geiger, MA

President, The Sterling Council

For more than three decades, Dione Geiger has been a transformative force in advancing leadership and organizational performance excellence throughout the Southeast. As a founding member and visionary executive leader of The Sterling Council, she has built and sustained one of the nation's most influential organizations focused on performance excellence.

Under Dione's strategic leadership, The Sterling Council administers two of the nation's most prestigious performance excellence programs: Florida's Governor's Sterling Award and Georgia's Oglethorpe Award. Both programs are rigorously grounded in the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. Now celebrating its 34th award cycle, the Governor's Sterling Award is the premier statewide performance excellence recognition in the country. Over the past 33 years, more than 100 awards have been presented to outstanding organizations, each representing a commitment to systematic excellence and continuous improvement.

A pioneer in modernizing performance excellence methodology, Dione has led groundbreaking initiatives to make Sterling's assessment process more accessible and impactful. Under her direction, The Sterling Council has significantly streamlined the Sterling Leadership Criteria and the assessment process, removing barriers while preserving the rigor that makes the program so valuable. Most notably, she has championed integrating artificial intelligence to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of examiner teams and feedback processes—positioning Sterling at the forefront of innovation in performance excellence assessment. These advances have enabled organizations to receive deeper insights and more actionable feedback while reducing the burden on applicants and examiners.

Recognizing the need for a dynamic platform where leaders could learn, connect, and share best practices, Dione founded the Sterling Leadership Conference—now the region's flagship annual gathering for performance excellence leaders. This multi-day event brings together hundreds of executives, managers, and aspiring leaders for an immersive experience featuring renowned keynote speakers, interactive workshops, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. The conference has become an essential forum for organizations to benchmark against excellence, discover innovative approaches to leadership challenges, and build lasting professional networks that extend beyond the event.

Dione's impact extends across Sterling's ecosystem. She has been instrumental in safeguarding the organization's long-term vitality and expanding its reach. Her leadership has driven significant growth in financial support for The Sterling Foundation, enabling critical investments in cutting-edge technology platforms that enhance organizational communication and streamline operations. Recognizing that excellence must be celebrated, she championed the creation of the John A. Pieno, Jr. Sterling Leadership Award, which annually honors exceptional leaders who embody the principles of the Sterling Framework for Performance Excellence.

A passionate advocate for developing the next generation of transformational leaders, Dione spearheaded the launch and expansion of the Sterling Leadership Fellows program. This selective, intensive program brings together aspiring leaders for a rigorous yearlong journey through a curriculum steeped in the core values and practices of high-performing organizations. Through this program and countless other initiatives, she has equipped leaders not merely to manage systems but to reimagine and elevate them—creating lasting cultures of excellence.

Through visionary leadership, unwavering integrity, and an uncompromising commitment to quality and innovation, Dione Geiger has fundamentally reshaped how organizations throughout the Southeast understand and pursue excellence. Her legacy is measured not only by the hundreds of organizations transformed by Sterling's influence but also by the elevated standard by which performance excellence is now defined and practiced across the region.