



**2026 SPIRIT OF SERVICE AWARDS  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How long does it take to prepare a nomination?**

Preparation time will vary but the nomination form has been designed as a straightforward process. Regardless of category, you will be asked to describe your initiative, its relevance and impact, and connection to the selected award category. You will also be asked to include evidence of outcomes, which may take varying amounts of time to compile depending on the complexity of your initiative. Also keep in mind that you will need final approval from an appropriate senior executive (at Band 2 or above) so that should be factored into your timeline as well.

### **How much does it cost to enter the awards?**

The entry fee is proportionate to your IPAA ACT membership fee. For example, a small agency membership is charged the small agency fee to enter the awards. A list of membership categories and the corresponding entry fees can be found [here](#).

### **Why is there such a tight word limit? Why is there a limit to the number of attachments?**

Word limits were added for the Spirit of Service Awards to ensure that nominations are of a consistent and manageable size for our assessors and judges.

### **Can I transfer unused word limits from one part of the nomination to another part?**

No. This is a limitation within our nomination management platform and which we cannot alter.

### **Why are there size limits to the evidence attached to a nomination?**

This limit is to help keep each nomination a manageable size for assessment. It is OK to compile more than one separate document into a single pdf attached to a nomination. However, it is vital that the information is referenced clearly in the body of the nomination so that the assessors can easily find evidence that confirms the claims made in the nomination.

### **Why do we have to nominate volunteer assessors as part of our nomination?**

Every nomination is assessed by at least three independent assessors. To ensure that this happens, we need a large pool of assessors.

Assessors are recruited via two channels - expressions of interest from past assessors, potential assessors who reach out to IPAA ACT through the website, and assessors nominated by agencies putting in nominations.

This helps us navigate potential conflicts of interest that need to be managed closely. The more assessors we have, the easier it is to be flexible in assigning nominations to the assessors.

You will be able to submit your nomination without completing the nominated assessors fields. However, your nomination will not be able to progress to assessment until we have the names and details for your nominated assessor(s).

**What should we do if the entrant who registered the nomination at the beginning of the nomination period leaves our organisation?**

If the nomination in Award Force is empty (i.e. no content has been added at this stage), you will need to register a new entrant, start a new nomination and advise IPAA ACT to delete the earlier (empty) nomination.

If the nomination already has content, please contact IPAA ACT at [awards@act.ipaa.org.au](mailto:awards@act.ipaa.org.au) and let us know. We will ask you to create a new entrant and then we will assign the existing nomination to that entrant.

**Who should approve our nomination for submission and why do we need to do this?**

Approval by the appropriate senior executive is important because your department needs to know that a nomination is being submitted and what it says.

We will accept approvals from Band 2 SES and upwards. You will need to identify the appropriate person and ensure that they are available to sign the nomination on the final page before the closing date. The Nomination template (in a Word Document format) includes a signature page. Please complete all fields and then scan and attach the approval to your nomination. Your nomination will not progress to assessment unless we have the approval.

**How does assessment occur?**

Assessment for the awards is a two-stage approach. For Stage 1 Assessment, scores are assigned by trained assessors against the criteria listed below. Stage 1 is rounded out by a moderation phase in which the scored nominations are reviewed by a subset of the judges panel to ensure consistency across the reviews.

At the end of Stage 1 Assessment, a shortlist of finalists in each of the four core award categories (Learning, Breakthrough, Community Engagement, and Collaboration) will be asked to progress to Stage 2 Assessment.

In Stage 2, finalist teams will prepare a pitch video (after receiving training provided by IPAA ACT) and will then present before the judges panel and participate in a Q&A session with the judges. The judges will score these presentations against the criteria listed below, and select the winners following these pitches.

Winners will be announced live at the Spirit of Service Awards Ceremony.

## What are the scoring criteria for nominations?

The scoring criteria are as follows:

### 1. Relevance to Category (0-5 points)

How well does the nomination fit the specific category?

5 = Perfect fit, 0 = Not relevant at all

### 2. Impact & Significance (0-5 points)

How meaningful or influential is the nomination in its field?

5 = Major impact, 0 = Minimal or no impact

### 3. Creativity & Originality (0-5 points)

How innovative, unique, or fresh is the nomination?

5 = Exceptionally original, 0 = Completely unoriginal

### 4. Evidence (0-5 points)

Does the nomination include evidence of outcomes?

5 = Strong links to evidence, 0 = Lacks evidence

## Who are the assessors?

Assessors are recruited from the Commonwealth and ACT public services. They are serving public servants. They come from evaluation, audit and assessment backgrounds and receive training in the awards assessment model. They also comply with an assessor code of conduct.

## Will the closing deadline be extended?

The closing deadline for nominations will not be extended, so please be sure to prepare and submit your materials with the 2 June deadline in mind. We are unable to offer extensions for two reasons. 1) Organisations are given just over 3 months to prepare their nominations and, 2) there are major downstream impacts on assessment for stage 1 and 2 and for delivery of the awards event.

## Where can I get help with preparing my nomination?

The best place to start is the [Nomination Guidelines](#) and reviewing the [nomination template](#) to understand the content you will need to prepare for your nomination. Make sure you have read these documents thoroughly.

You may also contact our awards team at [awards@act.ipaa.org.au](mailto:awards@act.ipaa.org.au) with questions.