

# Ad Age

# Small Agency Awards

## 2026 Entry kit

### Categories

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### General FAQs

### Terms and Conditions

**ALL SMALL AGENCY AWARDS CATEGORIES ARE SUBJECT TO TWO ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS. ALL ENTERING AGENCIES MUST BE MAJORITY INDEPENDENTLY OWNED (AT MINIMUM 51% PRIVATELY HELD) AND HAVE NO MORE THAN 150 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES.**

## Small Agency of the Year

The Ad Age Small Agency Awards is designed to uncover small agencies doing excellent work, often with tiny budgets, lean staff and tons of heart. Beyond the work, judges look for great culture, strong financial health, an independent spirit and shops that have unique stories to tell in a business that is, after all, about storytelling. Some of the past winners conquered adversity, some blazed new trails in management and intellectual property, and some strove to increase inclusivity in their ranks.

By entering this category, you're automatically considered for:

- **Agency of the Year: Overall**

One gold and one silver winner will be chosen for Small Agency of the Year.

- **Agency of the Year: By size**

A gold and a silver winner will be awarded in three size categories: 1-10, 11-75 and 76-150.

- **Agency of the Year: Regional**

The six different regional categories for U.S.-based agencies will produce one gold and one silver winner each. Those six are Northwest, Northeast, West, Midwest, Southwest and Southeast.

- **Agency of the Year: International**

A gold and a silver will be awarded to international entrants who enter the Agency of the Year category.

## Business Impact Agency of the Year **NEW**

This category honors small agencies that go beyond advertising to help brands solve broader business challenges. Winning agencies will show how their work influenced how a client operates, connects with customers or grows—through contributions that can include product or service design, UX/UI, branding and packaging, data or AI strategy and implementation, or new approaches to reaching and serving customers. Entries should demonstrate how the agency's thinking and execution helped clients improve customer experience, build loyalty, unlock new opportunities or drive measurable business outcomes. Judges will be looking at the agency's overall impact on its clients' businesses—not just individual campaigns.

*Note: Only one national award (gold and silver) will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## Design Agency of the Year

This category will award small agencies who specialize in design in the service of marketing. Successful candidates will present case studies of how their design expertise—be it in packaging, websites or more—contributed to the success of a client's product or service. *Note: Only one national award (gold and silver) will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## Experiential Agency of the Year

In today's ever-changing marketing landscape, brands need to think outside the digital box to uncover new avenues to engage consumers in real, authentic ways. We're seeking shops that have created successful experiential campaigns for clients. International agencies are welcome to enter.

*Note: Only one gold and one silver award will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## Media Agency of the Year

In today's marketing world, the creative idea is only half of the equation, and more and more often the media is driving the message. This category seeks to recognize agencies that are leading brands to explore fresh media options to drive home their messaging and shops that creatively use media to shape campaigns from their inception. Successful candidates in this category will demonstrate both a media-forward mindset and solid brand-building results beyond impressions. International agencies are welcome to enter.

*Note: Only one gold and one silver award will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## Newcomer Agency of the Year

This category seeks to find the best and the brightest of startups in the agency world. Small by their very nature, these shops comprise anything from freelance co-ops to a pair of partners leaving big agencies to break out on their own. With entrepreneurialism rising in the industry, this category will recognize shops 18 months or younger that are already showing promise with strong creative work and a growing client roster. International agencies are welcome to enter. Only agencies founded after September 1, 2024, are eligible.

*Note: Only one gold and one silver award will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## PR Agency of the Year

This category awards dedicated public relations agencies based in the U.S. Successful candidates will show good financials and strong case studies of how their PR campaigns paid off for clients via earned attention. Please do not enter ad agency campaigns with a PR component.

*Note: Only one national award (gold and silver) will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## Purpose-Led Agency of the Year

This category honors shops that have assisted marketers in leading their brands into social awareness issues such as sustainability, social justice, community development and more. This award will

also honor agencies which foster and build similar purpose-led initiatives either within their own ranks or via pro bono efforts on behalf of outside entities. Examples and results from this work will be used to judge this category.

*Note: Only one gold and one silver award will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## **Social Media/Influencer Agency of the Year NEW**

Winning agencies will have an established track record in helping identify and connect brands with influencers and social media stars and creating attention-getting campaigns based on social trends for marketers. Winners will show specific and measurable examples of client campaigns that generated attention and sales using social media outlets and social media stars. Shops may be part of a network.

*Note: Only one national award (gold and silver) will be given rather than several regional winners.*

## **Best Body of Work for a Single Client NEW**

This category recognizes small agencies that have built strong, ongoing relationships with a single client through a consistent body of creative work. Rather than a one-off campaign, entries should show how an agency delivered multiple pieces of work over time—across campaigns, platforms or executions—in service of the same brand. Submissions should demonstrate creative consistency, smart problem-solving and clear results across the portfolio. Judges will be looking for evidence that the agency's sustained approach helped the client grow, evolve or show up more effectively in market.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Best Use of AI**

As the use of generative tools continues to be a point of contention in the industry, this category will honor those that illustrate how artificial intelligence can be employed to augment the creative process, not supplant it. The category includes, but may not be limited to, the use of generative AI in campaign materials and the use of back-end AI tools to inform elements such as campaign strategy.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: B2B**

We understand that some of the most interesting brand challenges that agencies are presented with require devising communications not for consumers broadly, but for a very specific audience. This is particularly true for small agencies, and often that great work doesn't bubble up to the surface.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: Digital**

The rapidly changing digital landscape has presented a great opportunity for the talent within agencies to come up with innovative messaging ideas that can live in the places where a client's target demo resides—whether on their phones, laptops or elsewhere in the digital realm. This category is dedicated to celebrating the creativity that agencies are using in digital media. That can be social, gaming integrations, emerging tech activations, mobile or digital billboards. It's similar to Campaign of the Year: Integrated, but the creative execution must be rooted in digital.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: Experiential**

In today's ever-changing marketing landscape, brands need to think outside the digital box to uncover new avenues to engage consumers in real, authentic ways. We're seeking to uncover ambitious experiential campaigns that delivered tangible results for clients, whether they be trade show displays, in-market activations or other means of giving potential buyers hands-on experience with the brand.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: Health Care**

This award will go to a campaign created by a small agency in the field of health care—defined as advertising for a pharmaceutical product, hospital, health care institution, disease prevention and the like. DO NOT enter campaigns for wellness products such as vitamins and health foods or services like spas or massage therapy. This award will be judged by a panel of ad agency executives; international agencies are welcome to enter.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: Integrated**

This category recognizes an exceptional campaign that carries through various media (i.e. TV, print, social, etc.) to form a cohesive whole. The results are key in this category. We want to know that this campaign—which must be an integrated effort—actually worked, resonating with the target market and carrying out your promise to your client. These results can include basic ad metrics like awareness or recall, but you will get further if you also include business results such as sales or market share. Feel free to also include budget, timetable or other information that helps the judges better understand the problem and solution. Again, you

can submit a video with all this information, but please ensure it's clearly presented.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: Media**

In today's marketing world, the creative idea is only half of the equation, and more and more often the media is driving the message. This category seeks to recognize fresh media campaigns that are creatively using media to shape campaigns from their inception. Successful candidates in this category will demonstrate both a media-forward mindset and solid brand building results beyond impressions.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Campaign of the Year: Pro Bono**

Sometimes the work isn't just about delivering concrete business results. Sometimes it's about doing right and doing good and doing it for free. Such work should be done for charities, community groups and other such organizations (not free work for your brother-in-law's dry-cleaning business)— and entered in the Pro Bono Campaign of the Year Category.

*Note: This category will award one gold and one silver winner; campaigns must have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026 to be eligible.*

## **Best Agency Culture**

This is a talent business, and every agency wants nothing more than to be able to boast that it's a stimulating, exciting and fun place to work, with meaningful benefits and interest in employee well-being. After all, the best talent will churn out the best work for clients. Another thing that sets apart agencies in local ad markets is their impact on and relationship with the local community. For this award, we don't want to honor the shop with the best ping-pong table. We want to honor the shop that makes employees proud to show up at work each day, confident in the company's identity and purpose.

*Note: Best Agency Culture will award one gold and one silver agency with 150 employees or fewer.*

## **Executive of the Year**

This award will go to an executive who has done remarkable work in terms of growing a single agency or lifting the industry as a whole. Examples may include an individual who has turned around a flagging agency, someone who has come up with an industry-wide program to foster diversity among small shops or a person who has broken new ground for indie agencies. Be specific in your entries about the achievements of your candidate in the year 2025—this is not a lifetime achievement award. Executives at small agencies located outside the U.S. are welcome to enter. No duo or team entries will be accepted.

*Note: Only one winner will be awarded in this category.*

## **Account Manager of the Year**

This category will honor an account-side team member who demonstrated exceptional prowess in protecting, selling and helping to shape standout creative ideas that ultimately had a huge impact for a client's business. Submissions should include background information, case studies and testimonials (from agency and client teams) that will prove that without this person's leadership, a great campaign (or more) would not have seen the light of day. Successful entries will help judges understand exactly how the nominated executives made a difference, above and beyond account execs who happened to work on accounts with great work. It's open to any account staffer within an agency.

*Note: Only one winner will be awarded in this category.*

## **Agency Producer of the Year**

This category will honor a producer on the agency side who was instrumental in realizing the year's most compelling and challenging marketing messages and ideas. Submissions should include background information, case studies and testimonials (from agency and client teams) that illustrate the producer's contributions and how they ensured the success of projects. Specificity is key in helping judges understand exactly how the nominee made a difference.

*Note: Only one winner will be awarded in this category.*

## **Creative of the Year**

Creative of the Year is open to creative directors, copywriters, art directors, digital creatives and other creative individuals who have conceived groundbreaking ideas that moved the needle creatively and for business. Candidates will be evaluated through their work/ accomplishments as well as testimonials. NOTE: This category excludes chief creative officers. Creative teams may enter, but each member should have had a hand in each campaign submitted as part of the entry.

*Note: Only one winner will be awarded in this category.*

## **Media Planner of the Year**

Media Planner of the Year is open to media planners at advertising, media and PR agencies. Promising candidates have demonstrated a flair for bringing innovation to media planning. They've leveraged the vast media offerings in unexpected ways to successfully communicate a brand's message and deliver an engaging brand experience—in ways perhaps we've never seen before. Entries should be backed up with case studies, reels, testimonials, etc. that illustrate how the entrant's work made a direct impact on a specific campaign, brand or product launch. Specificity is key—the entries should show the jury exactly how the entrants had a significant impact on the work and business.

*Note: Only one winner will be awarded in this category.*

## **Strategic Planner of the Year**

Strategic Planner of the Year is open to strategy executives at advertising, media and PR agencies. Promising candidates will have demonstrated a talent of homing in on powerful insights and helping to turn them into groundbreaking ideas and work. Entries should include portfolios, reels, case studies, testimonials, etc. that illustrate how the planner's strategy and guidance made a direct impact on a specific campaign, brand or product launch. Specificity is key; the entries should show the jury precisely what impact entrants made on particular pieces of work or business.  
*Note: Only one winner will be awarded in this category.*

*Agencies may win in more than one category. We award one winner in each of the people categories (Executive of the Year; Account Manager of the Year; Agency Producer of the Year; Creative of the Year; Media Planner of the Year; and Strategic Planner of the Year) and gold and silver in all other categories.*

# Agency categories

## General requirements & submission questions

### Overview

The following information is required for the judging committee to determine the award winners. Each piece of information we're requesting is important; a complete application will improve your chances of winning.

All information included in the entries for the 2026 Small Agency Awards program is limited to achievements that occurred or work that debuted between Jan. 1, 2025 and March 1, 2026. While elements of a campaign may have launched earlier or continued beyond this window, the work entered must have run within the eligibility period.

Results prior to this timeframe may be included if they provide relevant context for judges to assess the significance of outcomes achieved during the eligibility period. Similarly, post-March 1 results directly tied to the work executed within the eligibility window may also be submitted. However, work that falls entirely outside the eligibility period will not be considered.

### We consider all information submitted publishable.

The information included in your entries should be publishable by the time the awards are unveiled in July 2026. This means anything in the entry can be published by Ad Age—any information marked confidential cannot be considered in the judging.

In the rare case, up to the discretion of each category's particular jury, the jury may opt to move an exceptional entry into what they deem to be the appropriate category if they feel it was entered into the wrong category. DO NOT submit case studies marked confidential. All information included in a case study must be information that can be published by the time the awards are announced otherwise the case studies cannot be considered by the juries.

## Submission Questions

### General questions

- **Your first name**
- **Your last name**
- **Your email address**
- **Agency or representative:** Are you from a PR shop (or other third-party representative) entering on behalf of an agency or campaign?
  - Yes
  - No, I'm from the agency.
- **Title\***
- **Entry category**

\*For Agency of the Year entries, please enter agency name.

### Agency questions

- **Ad agency name**
- **Ad agency full-time head count**
- **Ad agency HQ address**
- **Ad agency 2024 revenue\*\***
- **Ad agency 2025 revenue\*\***
- **Ad agency projected 2026 revenue\*\***
  - \*\*Please enter whole figures (e.g., 10,000,000.00). International entrants, please convert to U.S. dollars
- **Date agency was founded (for Newcomer Agency only)**
- **Agency's top three clients**
- **Agency owners and principals**
- **Agency details (500 words):** Tell us a little about your agency, its story if you will. Feel free to include founding myths and long-term goals. Include some color here too, such as what's unique about your shop and how you stand out among the competition for talent.
- **Agency growth and strengths (no word max):** Tell us about your growth, your strengths and why clients are coming to you in particular. Please also include a general breakdown of where your revenue comes from (e.g. 5% mobile, 30% digital, 2% out of home, etc.) Please provide a detailed list of account wins and losses with their estimated value per annum. If you have IP projects or other revenue streams that are not client-related, please note them as well.
- **Agency thought leadership:** Please describe in fewer than 500 words the ways in which your agency has helped to improve its business or served as an example for the agency business. Examples might include innovative compensation agreements, creative or technological innovation, the development of new revenue streams, or new and effective approaches to managing, acquiring and diverse and inclusive talent.
- **Diversity (350 words):** Diversity will be a key factor in our evaluation of agencies given the role it plays in innovative work, addressing the modern consumer and the needs of marketers today. Please share as much concrete detail on your agency's breakdown in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc. to give us an accurate picture of your diversity and cultural makeup. Please include in your entry statistics on the diversity of your agency overall, including percentages in upper-level leadership, the creative department as well as agency staff as a whole. A strong entry will also show concrete data on how your agency's diversity has evolved this year compared to previous years. We'd also like to know what moves you have made to increase the number of people of color, women, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities and members of other marginalized groups in your agency.

**continued...**

- **Portfolio and business results:** Include examples of work from no more than three distinct campaigns that ran at any point to between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026. You can upload up to four files per campaign. These results can include basic ad metrics like awareness or recall, but you will get further if you also include business results such as sales and market share. You may also include budget, timetable or other information that helps the judges better understand the problem and solution. Campaigns can be for the same client, but showing a range of work for varying clients improves your chances. **DO NOT** submit case studies marked confidential as they will not be considered by the jury.

Where possible, please include examples of how the work lived across different media formats (such as TV, digital, out-of-home or social), not just a single execution.

If the client is not a household name, please provide brief context for the judges about the client's business, industry and competition.

- **Campaign #1 description (max 500 words):** Describe the client assignment and objective. Tell us what the execution—or if it makes more sense, the campaign that it's a part of—achieved.
- **Campaign #1 file uploads:** Upload up to four samples (photo, video, website).
- **Campaign #2 description (max 500 words):** Describe the client assignment and objective. Tell us what the execution—or if it makes more sense, the campaign that it's a part of—achieved.
- **Campaign #2 file uploads:** Upload up to four samples (photo, video, website).
- **Campaign #3 description (max 500 words):** Describe the client assignment and objective. Tell us what the execution—or if it makes more sense, the campaign that it's a part of—achieved.
- **Campaign #3 file uploads:** Upload up to four samples (photo, video, website).

*Ad Age and the judges reserve the right to move entries between categories or to not award a category at all.*

## General requirements & submission questions

### Overview

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Results prior to this timeframe may be included if they provide relevant context for judges to assess the significance of outcomes achieved during the eligibility period. Similarly, post-March 1 results directly tied to the work executed within the eligibility window may also be submitted. However, work that falls entirely outside the eligibility period will not be considered.

### We consider all information submitted publishable.

The information included in your entries should be publishable by the time the awards are unveiled in July 2026. This means anything in the entry can be published by Ad Age—any information marked confidential cannot be considered in the judging.

In the rare case, up to the discretion of each category's particular jury, the jury may opt to move an exceptional entry into what they deem to be the appropriate category if they feel it was entered into the wrong category. DO NOT submit case studies marked confidential. All information included in a case study must be information that can be published by the time the awards are announced otherwise the case studies cannot be considered by the juries.

## Submission Questions

### General questions

- **Your first name**
- **Your last name**
- **Your email address**
- **Agency or representative:** Are you from a PR shop (or other third-party representative) entering on behalf of an agency or campaign?
  - Yes
  - No, I'm from the agency.
- **Title\***
- **Entry category**

*\*For Best Body of Work for a Single entries, please enter marketer (client) name.*

### Agency questions

- **Ad agency name**
- **Ad agency full-time head count**
- **Ad agency HQ address**
- **Pitch (350 words):** In 350 words or less, provide us with background on your work for this client, including:
  - the client and the length/nature of the relationship
  - the client's business challenges and objectives
  - a summary of your overall communications/creative strategy for this client
  - examples of creative executions across multiple campaigns, platforms or formats
  - a summary of the results, including relevant metrics that demonstrate effectiveness over time.
- **Supporting Information:** Please upload materials that best represent the breadth and impact of your work for this client:
  - Work samples (maximum of five uploads)
  - Feel free to include case studies, videos, images, pdfs, decks, etc.
  - Please submit high-resolution files.

# Campaign of the Year

## General requirements & submission questions

Ad Age Small Agency Awards

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### We consider all information submitted publishable.

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In the rare case, up to the discretion of each category's particular jury, the jury may opt to move an exceptional entry into what they deem to be the appropriate category if they feel it was entered into the wrong category. DO NOT submit case studies marked confidential. All information included in a case study must be information that can be published by the time the awards are announced otherwise the case studies cannot be considered by the juries.

## Submission Questions

### General questions

- **Your first name**
- **Your last name**
- **Your email address**
- **Agency or representative:** Are you from a PR shop (or other third-party representative) entering on behalf of an agency or campaign?
  - Yes
  - No, I'm from the agency.
- **Title\***
- **Entry category**

### Campaign background

Provide us with background on the campaign that includes:

- **Client name**
- **Description of the business challenge or problem addressed by the campaign (200 words):** If the client is not a household name, please provide brief context for the judges about the client's business, industry and competitive set.
- **Summary of media/communications plan and description of the creative executions, plus a summary of campaign results (300 words)**
- **Case study video upload (optional)**
- **Pro Bono Motivation (for Campaign of the Year: Pro Bono category only):** Explain why this cause is near and dear to your agency's heart (we know it must be, in order for your shop to be willing to devote countless hours to working on it for free).
- **The work:** Please include up to four samples (photo, video, website) that are part of a single campaign for a single client. You may submit a case study video if the campaign requires some explanation. Where possible, please include examples of how the work lived across different media formats (such as TV, digital, out-of-home or social), not just a single execution.
- **Client quote**

### Overview

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### We consider all information submitted publishable.

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## Submission Questions

### General questions

- **Your first name**
- **Your last name**
- **Your email address**
- **Agency or representative:** Are you from a PR shop (or other third-party representative) entering on behalf of an agency or campaign?
  - Yes
  - No, I'm from the agency.
- **Title\***
- **Entry category**

### Agency questions

- **Ad agency name**
- **Ad agency full-time head count**
- **Ad agency HQ address**
- **Agency culture (max 500 words):** Describe the mission, mantra or vibe of your agency. Provide examples of employee perks and tell us what your company means to the local community and any ways it helps your town/city. We want to hear what's unique about your office.
- **Employee statement 1:** Provide a statement from a staffer who is not a C-suite exec.
- **Employee statement 2:** Provide a statement from a staffer who is not a C-suite exec.
- **Photo #1:** Show us what's unique about your office.
- **Photo #2:** Show us what's unique about your office.
- **Optional video:** Feel free to upload a short video that highlights your culture.

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Results prior to this timeframe may be included if they provide relevant context for judges to assess the significance of outcomes achieved during the eligibility period. Similarly, post-March 1 results directly tied to the work executed within the eligibility window may also be submitted. However, work that falls entirely outside the eligibility period will not be considered.

### We consider all information submitted publishable.

The information included in your entries should be publishable by the time the awards are unveiled in July 2026. This means anything in the entry can be printed in Ad Age—any information marked confidential cannot be considered in the judging.

In the rare case, up to the discretion of each category's particular jury, the jury may opt to move an exceptional entry into what they deem to be the appropriate category if they feel it was entered into the wrong category. DO NOT submit case studies marked confidential. All information included in a case study must be information that can be published by the time the awards are announced otherwise the case studies cannot be considered by the juries.

### Submission Questions

#### General questions

- **Nominee's name**
- **Nominee's title**
- **Nominee's company**
- **Nominee's email**
- **Nominee's age**
- **Nominator's name**
- **Nominator's title**
- **Nominator's company**
- **Nominator's email**
- **Pitch (350 words):** In 350 words or less, tell us why the nominee is worthy of this award. Include background, reputation, previous honors, and titles. If there is an interesting backstory, tell us. Please be as specific as possible and describe their achievements in the last 12 months. Please provide any relevant campaign examples, results, metrics and testimonials that might back up your pitch. Creative teams are free to submit as a single entrant, as long as both members of the team were involved in each piece of the work submitted in the portfolio.
- **Supporting Information:** Please upload any supporting evidence—creative work, PowerPoint deck, highlight reel or a video case study—to make your case. For highlight reels, please be judicious with your selections. It's better to provide a shorter but dense picture of the entrant's accomplishments than a laundry list.
- **Video sample** (upload or link)
- **Work samples** (maximum 3; upload or link)
- **High-resolution headshot** (upload)

## What's new this year?

We have expanded the awards for 2026 by adding three new categories: Business Impact Agency of the Year, Social Media/Influencer Agency of the Year and Best Body of Work for a Single Client.

## What do I need to begin?

Before you begin the entry process, gather the necessary information and campaign samples. You will need to provide the following:

- **Agency name**
- **Agency size (number of employees)**
- **Agency revenue (2024, 2025 and this year's projected revenue)\***
- **Contact information (address, emails, etc.)**
- **Campaign samples:**
  1. Campaign description
  2. Campaign files (images, video, audio, PDF, PPT, DOC); direct uploads cannot exceed 2GB

Gathering all of the entry information and sample files ahead of time will ensure a smooth contest entry.

**Also, all information included should be publishable by the time the awards break in July 2026. Any information noted as "not for public" or "off the record" will not factor into the juries' evaluation.**

*\*The entry forms ask for revenue figures and we will still be requiring them. Rest assured that a dent in your financial column will not rule you out from being considered for an award. What counts, as always, is your creative product, your strategic thinking, your outcomes for clients and your responsiveness to your employees.*

## What kinds of agencies are eligible for the Small Agency Awards?

All kinds, as long as they meet the size and ownership requirements. After many discussions with the small agency community about what constitutes a "not big" shop, we established awards in three size categories: 1-10 staffers, 11-75 staffers and 76-150 staffers. All disciplines are welcome, including full-service ad agencies as well as design, digital, direct, media, mobile and promo agencies, or combinations thereof.

## Do I need to be independent?

Entrants must be majority independently owned, or in other words, at minimum 51% privately held. Agencies that are not eligible are those that are either majority or fully backed by a holding company (by this we mean firms like WPP, Omnicom Group, Publicis Groupe, Interpublic Group of Cos., Havas, Aegis or MDC Partners) or other firm, such as a publisher, marketer, etc.

## Can international agencies enter the Small Agency Awards?

Yes, international agencies are eligible to enter many of our categories. In the past, international agencies were only able to

enter our International Agency of the Year category. Categories including Experiential, Media and Newcomer Agency of the Year, all campaign categories, Executive of the Year and our Agency Culture category are now open to international entrants. Please note that all submissions should be written in English.

## What kind of work is eligible?

All kinds, including TV spots and campaigns, experiential, web videos, branded content, design (product, package, graphic, motion, experience, retail, etc.), websites, games, apps, social media, and other stuff that's harder to define: new distribution ideas, new ways to engage a community, etc. We ask that you enter only bona fide work for a real client of your agency that was actually produced and/or ran in a media environment. Please do not enter work that was created only to run in award shows. If judges raise any flags, we will be following up and we'll disqualify bogus work (e.g., work not approved by a client, work done for a client you don't have, ads that were run once, at 3 a.m. in Bend, Oregon, so they would be eligible to enter in Cannes, etc.). Campaigns should have run between Jan. 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026.

## Are PSAs eligible?

Yes; in fact, we have a special category just for pro bono work.

## Are B2B campaigns eligible?

Yes; we also have a special category just for B2B work. And if you feel it's good enough to stand out among consumer-focused work (and it's integrated), you can enter it in the Campaign of the Year: Integrated category as well.

## Are experiential campaigns eligible?

Yes; we have Experiential Agency of the Year and Campaign of the Year: Experiential categories to recognize experiential shops and campaigns.

## Are individual agency folks eligible?

Yes! Our people categories are dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the talent behind small agency success. That includes categories for creatives, account manager, agency producers and more.

## How much does it cost to enter?

There is a tiered entry fee structure for the program.

### Agency of the Year: 1-10 Employees:

\$375 per entry

### Agency of the Year: 11-75 Employees:

\$425 per entry

### Agency of the Year: 76-150 Employees:

\$500 per entry

### All other categories:

\$425 per entry

**Entries should accurately represent real, legitimately created work.** Exaggerated results, inaccurate financials, misleading or fabricated case studies or speculative work presented as real may be subject to disqualification. Ad Age may request verification at any point in the process.

#### **AI disclosure**

**Entrants are required to disclose whether artificial intelligence (AI) was used to help prepare the submission itself—including writing, editing or generating any part of the written entry, case study video, mockups or supporting materials.** This disclosure applies to the submission materials only and does not refer to AI used in the work or campaigns entered. The disclosure is intended to provide transparency around how submission materials were created and presented.

The Small Agency Awards program (the Program) is sponsored by Ad Age (the Sponsor), a business unit of Crain Communications Inc, 685 Third Ave., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10017 (Ad Age).

### Eligibility

The Program is open to anyone in the industry who meet the General Requirements posted for the Small Agency Awards. Employees of the Sponsor, their affiliates and members of their immediate families are not eligible. Eligibility is subject to the terms of each category as noted in our category descriptions. Categories and category eligibility are subject to change each year.

### How to enter

Instructions on how to enter each Program are posted on [AdAge.com/SmallAgencyAwards](https://www.adage.com/SmallAgencyAwards). Entries must comply with the instructions for the applicable Program. Entries into the competition are subject to a tiered pricing system, with standard fees for regular deadline entries and additional fees for final deadline entries. Fees are nonrefundable once entries are submitted. The dates and entry prices are subject to change each year. You can submit as many entries as you would like.

All entries must be received through the awards website at [AdAge.com/SmallAgencyAwards](https://www.adage.com/SmallAgencyAwards). As a reminder, anything in an entry will be considered potentially public information. There's no space for explicitly confidential information, and we ask entrants to anticipate that anything in their entry could become public—mostly because we don't want to wind up trying to honor a winner without being able to tell anyone why we want to honor them. Entries will not be acknowledged or returned. Entries will be accepted until April 15, 2026 at 5 p.m. ET. Finalists will be notified in June, and winners will be announced at the Ad Age Small Agency Conference & Awards in July.

All work entered into any of the categories of the 2026 Ad Age Small Agency Awards must be work that was legitimately created, commissioned and executed as described. This includes any use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools or processes in preparing entry forms, which must be transparently disclosed and accurately represented. Exaggerated results, inaccurate financials, misleading or fabricated case studies, speculative work presented as real, or undisclosed/inauthentic use of AI are grounds for disqualification. Ad Age may request verification at any point in the process and reserves the right to disqualify entries or bar future participation for any violations.

### Certification/Acknowledgment/Consent

EACH ENTRANT CERTIFIES THAT THE MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS PROGRAM (INCLUDING ARTWORK, IMAGERY AND IDEAS) ARE THE ORIGINAL WORKS OF THE ENTRANT. ENTRANTS RETAIN THE COPYRIGHT AND OTHER

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INTERESTS IN THEIR MATERIALS. HOWEVER, EACH ENTRANT ACKNOWLEDGES AND IRREVOCABLY CONSENTS THAT ANY AND ALL MATERIALS SUCH EN-TRANT SUBMITS FOR THIS PROGRAM MAY BE REPRODUCED, DISPLAYED, PUBLISHED (INCLUDING IN PRINT AND DIGITAL FORMATS), ARCHIVED (IN PRINT AND DIGITAL DATABASES) AND OTHERWISE FREELY USED WITHOUT LIMITATION OR RESTRICTION BY AD AGE, CRAIN COMMUNICATIONS INC, AND ITS PARTNERS AND AFFILIATES IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROGRAM. EACH ENTRANT ACKNOWLEDGES AND IRREVO-CABLY CONSENTS TO THE USE OF ENTRY INFORMATION IN PUBLICATIONS, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WEBSITES, ADVER-TISING AND IN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PROGRAM, UNLESS PROHIBITED BY LAW.

### Winning

All category wins are at the discretion of our judges. Judges have the right to not select a winner in any category if they feel materials submitted did not meet the standards, creativity or other qualities they are looking for in entries. The decisions of Ad Age and the judges are final and binding in all matters relating to this Program, including interpretation and application of the rules. Each category should produce one winner. The judges may select additional winners at their discretion based on the materials submitted. The judges may choose duos or dual winners at their discretion. Each main category winner will receive an award.

This Program is based on the quality and other factors determined by the judges of the materials submitted and winning depends on the views of the judges for each category. Winning is not based on the number of eligible responses received and Ad Age cannot predict the number of entrants who will participate in the Program.

### General conditions

All entrants agree to release Ad Age, sponsors and its partners and affiliates from any and all claims and liability with respect to and in any way arising from participating in the Program, accepting of any award, prize(s), or technical, hardware, software or other failures of any kind, cost or unavailable network connections, incomplete, garbled or delayed transmissions, injury or damage to an entrant's or third person's computer, whether caused by Ad Age, sponsors, entrants, users or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or by any technical or human error which may occur in the processing of submissions which may damage an entrant's system or limit an entrant's ability to participate in the Program. Ad Age reserves the right to modify or cancel all or any part of the Program for any reason at its sole discretion with a refund of the applicable entry fee paid as the sole remedy for any entrant.

# Terms and Conditions

Ad Age Small Agency Awards

Subject to applicable laws, entrants irrevocably grant to Ad Age, Program sponsors and their successors, assigns and sub-licensees the right and permission to use their name, voice, likeness and/or biographical material for advertising, promotional and/or publicity purposes in connection with the Program, in all forms of media and by any and all means and media (now and hereafter known), and on and in connection with related products, services, advertising and promotional materials (now known or hereafter developed), world-wide, in perpetuity, without any obligation, notice or consideration except for the awarding of the prize(s) to the Grand Prize Winner. All entrants agree to comply fully with each provision in the Program rules. Any person attempting to defraud or in any way tamper with the Program and any person who does not comply with the Program rules, will be ineligible for any award or prize. Program void where prohibited or restricted by law.