



2026 Excalibur Awards Call for Entries

Table of Contents

Entry Requirements and Rules	2
Campaign Categories.....	4
Tactical Categories.....	5
Special Awards	7
Judging	11

Entry Requirements and Rules

1. Eligibility

All communicators in the Houston area are eligible to submit as many entries in as many categories as they choose. Entrants must submit only their original work or work they directly supervised. The work entered must have been primarily completed or produced in the Greater Houston area during the 2025 calendar year. Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted.

2. Entry Deadline and Fees

Entries must be submitted with payment in full by one of the dates listed below.

	<u>Early Entry Fee</u> (January 26 – February 20*)	<u>Standard Entry Fee</u> (February 21 - March 20*)	<u>Late Entry Fee</u> (March 21 – March 27*)
Member	\$125	\$150	\$250
Non-Member	\$200	\$250	\$300
Student **	Free	Free	Free
Special Awards	\$50 for members, \$75 for non-members		

*Awards are due by midnight CST on the date indicated to receive correct pricing.

**University Student Campaign Category Only

3. Payment Options

Payments will be accepted by credit card on the submission site or by check. If paying by check, confirmation email of award entry must be submitted with payment.

4. Entry Requirements

Candidates should use their best judgment in putting together their entries based on PRSA and Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) best practices. Winning entries will reflect the highest standards for strategic thinking, ethical practice, and measurement that are consistent with the Barcelona Principles. Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted. All Campaign and Tactical Category entries must include and will be judged on the following:

- **Promo:** 100-word description (to be used for promotional purposes).
- **Overview statement/summary:** A clear and concise overview of the entry (600-word limit).
- **Research/Planning:** Explain the methods applied in identifying a problem or opportunity; Include the original statement of objective(s), audience(s), and measurable criteria; Justify the chosen strategies and techniques (include references to primary/secondary, informal/formal research as applicable); Describe the accuracy of budget and staffing projections.

- **Implementation:** Describe the strategies, techniques and tools used to meet the objectives. What key messages did you convey, and why? What, if any, challenges did you overcome? Include the project's timetable and budget.
- **Evaluation:** Detail success by matching outcomes to the objectives. Discuss the impact of the program on the target audience and organization. How did you measure results? Did you meet the timetable and budget? If not, why not?
- **Supporting Materials:** Claims made in your summary must be substantiated by supporting materials included with your entry. Supporting materials are limited to one (1) PDF document, not to exceed twenty (20) pages or 15 MB. The PDF can include a combination of photos, samples, drawings, graphics, maps, videos*, and printed collateral.
**Upload videos to YouTube and provide a link in your PDF document.*

5. Submitting Your Entry

Each entry, along with the summary and all supporting materials, must be submitted electronically at <https://prsahouston.secure-platform.com/a/>.

- Create a new account [here](#) and complete the user profile.
- Login with your email address and password.
- Go to **Entry Form** found in the top navigation bar and start your entry submission.

You may save your work and return to this site as often as needed as long as you complete and submit all parts of the entry submission by the late entry deadline of March 27, 2025 (by February 20 for early bird discount fees and by March 20 for standard entry fees). You can edit your submission at any time as long as it is not in your "cart." If you have already placed your submission in the cart, simply click "remove" and then you can click on "edit" to access your submission. All entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges made up of PRSA members from another PRSA chapter assigned by PRSA National.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Campaign Categories

The campaign categories recognize complete programs that incorporate sound research, planning, execution and evaluation. Winning entries will reflect the highest standards for strategic thinking, ethical practice, and measurement that are consistent with the [Barcelona Principles](#). Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted.

Programs from categories 1-12 are eligible for consideration for the Grand Excalibur Award.

1. Community Relations

Includes programs that aim to improve relations with, or seek to win the support or cooperation of, people or organizations in communities in which the sponsoring organization has an interest, need or opportunity. “Community” in this category refers to a specific geographic location or locations. (Campaigns designed to promote products should be entered in Marketing Consumer Products or Services).

2. Reputation/Brand Management

Programs designed to enhance, promote or improve the reputation of an organization with its publics or key elements of its publics, either proactively or in response to an issue, event or market occurrence. (Campaigns designed to launch or promote a specific product or service’s launch or sales/marketing effort should not be entered in this category. Instead, refer to Category 7 or 8).

3. Diversity and Inclusion/Multicultural Public Relations

Programs designed to advance diversity and inclusion and yield measurable results or institutional, marketing and community relations, specifically targeted to a cultural group. Efforts devoted to promoting inclusivity and/or dismantle discrimination for racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation and gender differences.

4. Events and Observances

Includes programs or events such as commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities. These events or observances may be as short as one day or as long as one year.

5. Public Service/Non-Profit/Public Affairs Campaigns

Includes programs that advance public understanding of societal issues, problems or concerns. Includes programs specifically designed to influence public policy and/or affect legislation, regulations, political activities or candidacies — at the local, state or federal government levels — so that the entity funding the program benefits.

(Similar programs conducted to enhance an organization’s standing, or to otherwise serve its interests directly, will fall under Category 2: Reputation/Brand Management).

6. Marketing Consumer Products and Services

Includes programs designed to introduce new products or services or promote existing products or services to a consumer audience.

7. Marketing Business to Business

Includes programs designed to introduce new products or promote existing products or services to a business audience.

8. Crisis Communications and Issues Management

Includes programs undertaken to deal with an unplanned event that required an immediate response and programs undertaken to deal with issues that could extraordinarily affect ongoing business strategy.

9. Internal Communications

Includes programs targeted specifically to publics directly aligned with an organization, such as employees, members, affiliated dealers and franchisees.

10. Investor Relations/Financial Communications

Includes programs directed to shareowners, other investors and the investment community.

11. Integrated Communications

Includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines.

12. Most Effective Campaign on a Shoestring Budget (\$5,000 or less)

Successful campaign despite constraints of a small budget. This does not include staff time and overhead. Campaign can cover any topic. Identical entries in multiple categories will not be accepted.

13. University Student Campaign

Successful campaign produced by a student group, class or organization from an accredited four-year institution in the Greater Houston area or affiliated PRSSA Chapter. Campaign can cover any topic above. This category is not eligible for the Grand Excalibur Award. If students wish to compete for the Grand Excalibur Award, they must enter their submission(s) in categories 1-12 at the applicable entry rate.

Tactical Categories

These categories recognize excellence in the tactical elements that contribute to the success of larger public relations campaigns. Though these tactical elements cannot be reasonably held to the same standards as public relations campaigns, winning entries still must demonstrate sound effort in research, planning, implementation and evaluation.

1. News Release

Traditional written news release or video news release. May also include multi-media news release.

2. Feature Stories*

Feature articles that have been written by a practitioner and submitted and published through his/her efforts. Submit text of feature article, as well as documentation of publication and placement. **Entries must be written in their entirety or substantively by the entrant, and not merely "pitched."*

3. Editorials/Op-Ed Columns*

Opinion articles written as editorials, guest columns or letters to the editor. Submit text of article and documentation of publication. **Entries must be written in their entirety or substantively by the entrant, and not merely "pitched."*

4. Podcasts/Livestreams

Audio or video programs/shows produced as podcasts, downloadable for play on portable media players (e.g., iPods, MP3 players, etc.), or live or recorded media files distributed over the Internet using streaming media technology. The entry must provide a link to the podcast or livestream.

5. Websites

Use of a website as part of a public relations program. Include screen grabs or copies of key pages to support your summary. Additionally, include the website URL for external sites.

6. Social Media

Use of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, etc. as part of a public relations program. Include screen captures or copies of key pages to support your summary. Additionally, include the website URL for external sites.

7. Blogs

Web-based journals, or blogs, that engage key stakeholders and/or communicated either a corporate, public service or industry position. Include screen captures of the blog being entered, as well as the actual site URL.

8. Video

Created for internal or external use to publicize products, services or issues, shape public opinion or promote awareness. Include a link to your video.

9. Newsletters

Publications (either printed or electronic) designed, written and published periodically to provide brief and timely information to target audiences while supporting an organization's overall objectives. Submit three consecutive issues with the entry.

10. Brochures

Pamphlets, booklets or other small publications (either printed or electronic) designed to inform a target audience about an organization, product, service or issue. Submit one copy of the publication with the entry.

11. Magazines

Publications (either printed or electronic) designed to provide in-depth information about an organization or topic on a regular basis. Magazines typically differentiate from newsletters by the number of pages and length of articles. Submit three consecutive issues.

12. Special Publications

Single-issue publications (either printed or electronic) designed for a special purpose. Books, posters and other publications not eligible for consideration in other categories should be entered here. Submit one copy of the publication along with the entry.

13. Annual Reports

Publications (either printed or electronic) that report on an organization's annual performance. Submit one copy of the publication along with the entry.

14. Speech Writing/Speeches

Writing for oral delivery of a presentation that best communicates the speaker's messages, position or desire for action.

15. Creative or Unconventional Tactics

Unconventional, creative tactics or approaches used as part of a public relations program. (If the creative/unconventional tactic included props or other objects, document those items with photos or videos).

16. Special Projects

Other common public relations tactics that are not otherwise listed, including public service announcements, press conferences, satellite media tours, trade shows, etc.

Special Awards

Special Awards will be presented in the following categories: PR Agency, Individual Performer, Communications Team and Legacy.

PR Agency Categories

The **PR Agency of the Year Award** recognizes an outstanding PR firm for exceptional growth and accomplishments during 2025. Entries for PR Agency of the Year Award should be submitted in one (1) PDF document not to exceed 10 pages or 5 MB. If you choose to include a video, upload the video to YouTube and provide a link in your PDF document.

All entries in the PR Agency special award category will be judged on the following criteria:

- Evidence of financial growth
- Client list growth
- Client retention
- PR innovation

Entries should include the following:

- Agency summary
- Three client testimonials
- Key client roster for last two years
- Staffing (split executive, account and support staff)
- Signed letter from President/CEO/Owner stating gross revenue for the application year and two years prior to demonstrate financial growth (Winners may be asked to submit IRS Form 1040 Schedule C or Form 1120 to verify their gross revenue aligns with application requirements.)
- Achievements during the entry period
- An overview of the firm's practice areas, offices, and capabilities
- A breakdown of how much business falls into each of the firm's practice areas
- A list of any long-term accounts
- Review of exceptional client work during the entry period, such as campaign or product launch, help with crisis, etc.
- Details of account wins and losses within the entry period
- Information about new products, partnerships, and innovations within the entry period
- Details of HR programs and staff initiatives that moved forward during the entry period
- Information about agency involvement in professional organizations, such as PRSA Houston, the Council of PR Firms, etc.
- Information about charitable, community and educational efforts by the firm

If the agency is a subsidiary, or has been spun off from a parent company, the entry must include details of sources of start-up finance and a full explanation of the relationship with the parent company, including ongoing financial and infrastructure support (e.g. access to training, HR, financial management, etc.).

SA-A1) New PR Agency of the Year

Open to any agency which has been in business for less than 24 months as of December 31, 2025. The CEO of the firm is required to certify in writing the firm's date of incorporation.

SA-A2) Small PR Agency of the Year

Open to any agency with gross revenue less than \$350,000 in 2025.

SA-A3) Mid-Size PR Agency of the Year

Open to any agency with gross revenue between \$350,000 and \$999,999 in 2025.

SA-A4) Large PR Agency of the Year

Open to any agency with gross revenue of more than \$1 million in 2025.

Individual Performer Categories

Entries for the **Individual Special Awards** should be submitted in one (1) PDF document not to exceed seven (7) pages in length and should not use less than a 10-point font size. If you choose to include a video, upload the video to YouTube and provide a link in your PDF document. Award

entry elements are detailed below for each category. Individuals may nominate themselves or be nominated by others.

SA-I1) Young Public Relations Professional of the Year

The Young Public Relations Professional of the Year Award recognizes a relative newcomer to public relations for demonstrating exceptional leadership and professional achievements during his/her initial years in the profession.

The Young PR Professional of the Year demonstrates the following characteristics:

- Shows emerging leadership and outstanding achievements in public relations
- Has a good grasp of PR strategy and tactics
- Makes specific contributions to the community, the PR profession and his/her employer(s)/clients
- Displays traits and qualities that distinguish the nominee and his/her accomplishments, such as business savvy or creativity

All PR professionals who have been in full-time practice for less than three years (began full-time practice Jan. 1, 2023 or later) are eligible (this period excludes internships and part-time employment while working on a degree).

Please include the following in the entry:

- Bio of the nominee/brief résumé/education background
- Accomplishments achieved during the entry period
- Activities outside work, including charity work, industry associations, etc.
- 200-word statement from nominee on why he/she should be considered
- If entry is submitted by the nominee, include one letter of recommendation written by a current manager, supervisor or client

SA-I2) Public Relations Professional of the Year

The Public Relations Professional of the Year Award recognizes an established practitioner for exceptional leadership and professional accomplishments during 2025, as well as career achievements. All PR professionals who have been in full-time practice for more than three years (began full-time practice prior to Jan. 1, 2023) are eligible.

The PR Professional of the Year demonstrates the following characteristics:

- Exceptional account/company leadership
- Outstanding achievement in public relations
- Knowledge of PR strategy, tactics and budgeting
- Makes specific contributions to the community, the PR profession and his/her employer(s)/clients
- Displays traits and qualities that distinguish the nominee and his/her accomplishments

Please include the following in the entry:

- Bio of the nominee/brief résumé/education background
- Accomplishments achieved during entry period
- Activities outside work, including charity work, industry associations, etc.
- 200-word statement from nominee on why he/she should be considered

- If entry is submitted by the nominee, include one letter of recommendation written by a current manager, supervisor or client

SA-I3) CEO Communicator of the Year

The CEO Communicator of the Year Award honors the outstanding performance of Houston area chief executive officers in their roles as chief communicator. The role of the CEO has evolved. Not only do they encourage and adapt to changing business models, but frequently the CEO must take the lead in communicating with employees, shareholders, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders to achieve success for their organization.

To qualify, nominees should demonstrate effective communication as part of their leadership, whether in a crisis situation or in day-to-day operations. Supporting examples may include the CEO's appearance in the media, before industry or community groups or through a leadership role in civic, religious or business organizations.

Nominees must be chief executive officers or hold equivalent positions in the Greater Houston area. Nominators should provide details about the nominee and his/her qualifications with reference to the period between Jan. 1, 2025 and Dec. 31, 2025. Please also include:

- Bio of the nominee/brief résumé/education background
- Accomplishments achieved during entry period

SA-I4) Solo Practitioner of the Year

Open to any individual PR professional who has worked independently for at least 24 months and not employed by, or affiliated with, a corporate entity.

- Practice summary (must not exceed two pages, single-sided in length and should not use less than a 10-point font size)
- Key client roster for last two years
- Signed letter stating gross revenue for 2024 and 2025 to demonstrate financial growth.
- Achievements during the entry period
- Three client testimonials

Communications Team Category

The **Communications Team of the Year Award** recognizes an outstanding communications team for exceptional professional accomplishments during 2025. Individuals may nominate their own team or the team may be nominated by others. Entries for the Communications Team Special Award should be submitted in one (1) PDF document not to exceed five (5) pages in length and should not use less than a 10-point font size. If you choose to include a video, upload the video to YouTube and provide a link in your PDF document.

Entry submissions should include:

- Number of staff employed in PR function (please split professional and support staff)
- Annual communications budget for 2025 (broken down into areas of marketing activity directly under the team's control)

- Outline of goals for the organization as a whole and the role of the communications team in fulfilling those goals
- Outline of PR-related issues and objectives during the entry period
- Achievements during the entry period
- Use of internal/external resources, including agencies and other companies
- Where appropriate, details of work with other departments within the organization

The judges will look for evidence of success in executing PR campaigns or programs during 2025 as part of an overall communications strategy. They will also look for cost-effective use of both in-house and external resources.

Legacy Award

The prestigious annual Legacy Award recognizes a distinguished professional for outstanding lifetime achievement in the field of public relations.

PRSA Houston members can nominate themselves or someone else for the Legacy Award. Nominees must be a current or former PRSA Houston chapter member and have at least 25 years of experience in public relations. The award may be given posthumously.

Candidates are judged on:

- Outstanding service to his/her company, community, organization or educational institution
- Outstanding service to PRSA Houston
- Honors, awards and recognition, and accreditation
- Advancing the body of knowledge and public image of the profession through teaching, writing, speaking, mentoring, and/or PRSA volunteer/leadership positions

[Click here to submit a Legacy Award Nomination.](#)

Judging

Judges – All entries will be judged by professional and distinguished members of a partner PRSA Chapter. Entrants are strongly encouraged to review the judging criteria and scoring on page 15 when preparing entries.

Awards – As merited in each category, Gold, Silver and Bronze Excalibur Awards will be awarded to first, second and third place winners, respectively. Judges reserve the right to declare no winners in a category if they determine that no entry has met the minimum qualifications for a professional program or project. One Gold, Silver and Bronze winner will be awarded per category; however, in the event of a tie where two or more entries receive the exact same score, duplicate awards will be given.

Notification – All finalists will be informed that they have met the minimum score to qualify for an Excalibur Award. Whether a finalist has actually won a Gold, Silver, Bronze Excalibur Award will not be disclosed until the night of the ceremony. It is possible that a qualifying score may not win depending on the number of first, second or third place winners in a given category. The Grand Excalibur will not be announced until the night of the awards ceremony; however, finalists will be notified if they've met the minimum score to qualify.

Average Minimum Scoring (Campaigns) – Campaigns will be scored on a 100-point scale. The average score by the judges will be used to help determine if an entry qualifies for an Excalibur Award. The average minimum scores for each award level for the campaign categories are as follows:

- Bronze** – average minimum score of 70
- Silver** – average minimum score of 80
- Gold** – average minimum score of 90

Receiving a minimum score does not guarantee a particular level of Excalibur Award. The average minimum score only qualifies the entry to be considered for an award. As merited in each category, Gold, Silver and Bronze Excalibur Awards will be awarded to first, second and third place winners, respectively.

Average Minimum Scoring (Tactics) – Tactics will be scored on a 55-point scale. The average score by the judges will be used to help determine if an entry qualifies for an Excalibur Award. The average minimum scores for each award level for the tactics categories are as follows:

- Bronze** – average minimum score of 35
- Silver** – average minimum score of 45
- Gold** – average minimum score of 50

Receiving a minimum score does not guarantee a particular level of Excalibur Award. The average minimum score only qualifies the entry to be considered for an award. As merited in each category, Gold, Silver and Bronze Excalibur Awards will be awarded to first, second and third place winners, respectively.

The Grand Excalibur Award will be presented to the **campaign entry** deemed the “Best of Show.” The minimum score needed to be considered by the judges for the Grand Excalibur Award will be 95. If your campaign qualifies for this award, entrants must be prepared to provide a video describing their campaign (not to exceed two minutes).

Grounds for Disqualification/Reclassification – Judges retain the right to reject any entry that is either incomplete or improperly prepared according to the guidelines. Entries that are incorrectly classified may be reclassified or disqualified at the discretion of the judges. Entry fees will not be returned in those cases nor will entrants be notified.

Judging Criteria & Scoring

Research/Planning

Explain the methods applied in identifying a problem or opportunity; Include the original statement of objective(s), audience(s), and measurable criteria; Justify the chosen strategies and techniques (include references to primary/secondary, informal/formal research as applicable).

Implementation

The caliber of materials, activities, writing, publications and other tools and techniques applied in executing the program.

Evaluation/Measurement

Demonstrated efforts in identifying, analyzing and quantifying results to determine if and how well a program accomplished its goals and objectives. Describe the accuracy of budget and staffing projections.

Scoring – Campaign Categories

Research (15 points)

Poor 0 to 5; Fair 6 to 9; Good 10 to 12; Excellent 13 to 15

Planning (25 points)

Poor 0 to 10; Fair 11 to 16; Good 17 to 22; Excellent 23 to 25

Implementation (40 points)

Poor 0 to 20; Fair 21 to 30; Good 31 to 35; Excellent 36 to 40

Evaluation (20 points)

Poor 0 to 6; Fair 7 to 11; Good 12 to 17; Excellent 18 to 20

TOTAL: 100 points

Scoring – Tactics Categories

Research (10 points)

Poor 0 to 4; Fair 5 to 6; Good 7 to 8; Excellent 9 to 10

Planning (10 points)

Poor 0 to 4; Fair 5 to 6; Good 7 to 8; Excellent 9 to 10

Implementation (25 points)

Poor 0 to 10; Fair 11 to 17; Good 18 to 21; Excellent 22 to 25

Evaluation (10 points)

Poor 0 to 4; Fair 5 to 6; Good 7 to 8; Excellent 9 to 10

TOTAL: 55 points