

PRSA Chicago Awards Program 2026 Call for Entries

DEFINITIONS

Use the following definitions to determine the most appropriate category and subcategory based on your program's objectives and target audiences.

Business — Products and Services: These subcategories include all for-profit entities. A company that derives 50% or more of its sales from manufacturing products should enter under "Products." A company that derives 50% or more of its revenue from providing services (such as banks, utilities, retailers or transportation companies) should enter under "Services."

Government: Includes all government bureaus, agencies, institutions or departments at the local, state and federal levels — including the armed forces, regulatory bodies, courts, public schools and state universities.

Association: Includes trade and industry groups, professional societies, chambers of commerce and similar membership-based organizations.

Nonprofit: Intended for health and human services organizations, as well as educational and cultural institutions not included in other subcategories. This category is not intended for organizations that may hold nonprofit status but operate primarily as business enterprises. Programs receiving significant funding or sponsorship from private-sector or government entities should be entered under the applicable subcategory or under "Partnerships," if appropriate.

PROGRAM AWARD CATEGORIES

In general, categories align with the PRSA Silver Anvil Strategic Campaign Awards, where a program is defined as a broad range of separate yet consistent and related elements implemented over time.

1. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1A. Associations/Nonprofit Organizations

1B. Government

1C. Business

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.

2. CONTENT MARKETING

2A. Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations

2B. Business-to-Business

2C. Business-to-Consumer

Includes programs that demonstrate a strategic approach to creating and distributing valuable content to attract, acquire and engage target audience(s). Include examples and metrics.

3. CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Includes programs undertaken to deal with an unplanned event that required an immediate response.

4. EVENTS AND OBSERVANCES

4A. More Than Seven Days

4AA. Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations

4AB. Business Products and Services

4AC. Consumer Products and Services

4B. Seven or Fewer Days

4BA. Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations

4BB. Business Products and Services

4BC. Consumer Products and Services

Includes virtual or in-person programs or events, such as commemorations, observances, conferences, openings, yearlong anniversaries, celebrations or other special activities. Events that took place for longer than a one-week period should be entered in “4A. More Than Seven Days” and events occurring within a time span of one week should be entered in “4B. Seven or Fewer Days.”

5. FINANCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Includes programs directed to shareowners, other investors and the investment community; includes communication programs related to decentralized currencies.

6. GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Includes any type of program, such as Reputation/Brand Management, Marketing or Events and Observances, that demonstrates effective global communications implemented in more than one country.

7. INFLUENCER MARKETING **New for 2026**

7A. Macro-Influencers

7B. Micro-Influencers

Macro-influencers: Celebrities, executives, bloggers and journalists who have 10,000–1M followers. They have the highest topical relevance on the spectrum, with category-specific influence – such as lifestyle, fashion or business.

Micro-influencers: Everyday consumers or employees or industry experts who have 500–9,999 followers. They have the highest brand relevance and resonance on the spectrum of influencers, with influence driven by their personal experience and strength of relationship with their networks.

8. INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

8A. Associations/Nonprofit Organizations

8B. Government

8C. Business-to-Business

8D. Consumer Products

8E. Consumer Services

Includes creative and effective integrated campaigns, along with other marketing or communications including paid, earned, shared and owned efforts. Demonstrate the meaningful PR/communications components and how they integrated with other disciplines.

9. ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Includes programs that deal with issues that could extraordinarily affect ongoing business strategy.

10. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

10A. Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations

10B. Business

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

11. MARKETING

11A. Business-to-Business

11B. Consumer Products

11C. Consumer Services

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

12. MOST EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN ON A \$5,000 TO \$10,000 BUDGET **New for 2026**

Effective campaign delivered within parameters of a limited budget. This does not include staff time and overhead.

13. MOST EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET (\$5,000 OR LESS)

New for 2026

Successful campaign despite constraints of a small budget. This does not include staff time and overhead.

14. MOST EFFECTIVE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) CAMPAIGN

Efforts devoted to promoting inclusivity and/or dismantling discrimination for racial, ethnic, religious or sexual orientation and gender differences.

15. CLIMATE ACTION & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY **New for 2026**

This honors excellence in energy efficiency, natural resources, programs and campaigns that limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and contamination, protect and restore ecosystems and contribute to the adaptation to climate change.

16. CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP **New for 2026**

This celebrates campaigns and programs that ignite individuals, technology, and partnerships to create a positive impact on society at the local, national, or international level, including but not limited to areas such as poverty, hunger, housing, health and well-being, climate, equity, education, and human rights.

17. MULTICULTURAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

For any type of program, such as institutional, marketing and community relations, specifically targeted to a cultural group.

18. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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.

19. PUBLIC SERVICE

19A. Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations

19B. Business

19C. Partnerships (Funded jointly by businesses and other organizations, including nonprofit and government)

Includes programs that advance public understanding of societal issues, problems or concerns.

20. REPUTATION/BRAND MANAGEMENT

20A. Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations

20B. Business

Includes 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.

TACTICAL PROJECT AWARD CATEGORIES

In general, categories align with the PRSA Bronze Anvil Tactical Awards.

PAID:

21. PAID PROMOTIONS **New for 2026**

Use of sponsorships, paid placements or other marketing communications tactics that complement a broader public relations strategy or approach and generate exceptional ROI. These efforts should be targeted and strategic, and ultimately demonstrate a distinct purpose that aligns with the goals of an overview campaign or specific desired outcome.

EARNED:

22. MEDIA RELATIONS

22A. Associations/Nonprofit Organizations

22B. Government

22C. Business-to-Business

22D. Consumer Products

22E. Consumer Services

Tactics, programs and events driven entirely by media relations. Submit press releases, media advisories, pitch letters, requests for coverage, etc., along with a one-page summary that includes measurable objectives and results, including media impact. Upload or provide YouTube/Vimeo links to any television or radio coverage.

SHARED:

23. SOCIAL MEDIA

23A. Single Channel Use

23B. Multichannel Use

How did you use social media to tell a story or connect with an audience? Share screenshots of links to your work and provide detailed results focusing on engagement and conversions, where applicable.

24. INFLUENCER MARKETING

Tactic that focuses on using paid spokespeople and key leaders to increase awareness and drive your brand's message to the larger market. Include details of achievements/benchmarks on how the spokesperson met/exceeded campaign goals.

25. BEST USE OF AI **New for 2026**

25A. Direct Audience Engagement

25B. Media Relations

25C. Social Media

Demonstrate how AI played a pivotal role in successfully driving or enhancing traditional tactical efforts within a campaign. Provide examples of tools used and results from their use.

OWNED:

26. DIGITAL PLATFORM

Did you launch or substantially enhance a digital platform? How was it launched and how much risk was involved in your marketing plan? What value did the end user receive and how did it specifically match goals? Include metrics and benchmarks. This entry can be completed by a vendor or the customer.

27. DATA INSIGHTS

The use of data or research in a program to inform a communications strategy and/or message development. Demonstrate how the insights were acquired and applied.

28. WEBSITES **New for 2026**

Use of a website as part of a communications or content marketing program. Include screen grabs or copies of key pages to support your one-page summary. Additionally, include the website URL for external sites and how the site met or exceeded your communications benchmarks.

29. NON-TRADITIONAL TACTICS **New for 2026**

Innovative, unconventional, creative tactics or approaches used as part of a public relations program. Documentation of how the tactic specifically contributed to the measurable results of the campaign should be included in the one-page summary. (Photographic and/or video representation of any physical objects should be uploaded to be fully considered in this category.)

30. ANNUAL REPORTS **New for 2026**

Publications that report on an organization's annual performance. Upload a sample copy of the publication, along with a one-page summary.

31. BLOGS/VLOGS **New for 2026**

Web-based journals (blogs) or video-based journals (blogs) that communicated to a target audience. The one-page summary should include rationale for blogging/vlogging strategy, target audiences and statistics or other means of quantifiable measurement to support stated objectives. Screen downloads of the blog/vlog being entered, as well as the actual site URL, must be submitted as part of the story.

32. NEWSLETTERS **New for 2026**

Publications — digital or print — designed, written and published/distributed periodically to provide brief and timely information to target audiences while supporting an organization's overall objectives. Upload samples of three consecutive issues, along with a one-page summary including goals and results.

33. SINGLE-ISSUE PUBLICATIONS **New for 2026**

Single-issue publications designed for a special purpose. Books and other publications not eligible for consideration in other categories should be entered here. Upload a sample of the publication along with the one-page summary including goals and results.

34. MAGAZINES **New for 2026**

Publications designed to provide in-depth information about an organization or topic on a regular basis (Print, digital only and both will be considered). Magazines typically differentiate from newsletters by the number of pages and length of articles. Upload samples of three consecutive issues along with a one-page summary including goals and results.

35. VIDEO

Produced videos to inform target audiences of an event, brand, product, service, issue or organization. The one-page summary should include usage statistics or other means of quantified measurement to support stated objectives.

36. BRANDED CONTENT

Use of content generation to promote a particular brand which funds the content's production. Upload samples along with a one-page summary including goals and results.

37. PODCASTS **New for 2026**

How did you tell your story — was the purpose to teach or share? Was it intended for internal or external audiences and was there engagement on multiple platforms? Provide goals, results and listener feedback.

ORGANIZATIONAL AWARD CATEGORIES

38. BEST IN-HOUSE TEAM

38A. Associations/Nonprofit Organizations

38B. Government

38C. Business (Budget less than \$5M)

38D. Business (Budget of \$5M or More)

A public relations/public affairs/communications team that demonstrates excellence in public relations.

39. BEST AGENCY

39A. Best Boutique Agency (Revenue less than \$5M)

39B. Best Small Agency (Revenue \$5M – \$20M)

39C. Best Mid-sized Agency (Revenue \$20M – \$75M)

39D. Best Large Agency (Revenue \$75M – \$200M)

An agency team that demonstrates excellence in public relations.

40. BEST COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM OR DEPARTMENT

****No fee to enter****

Recognizes a college or university communications program that is preparing the next generation of practitioners through innovative curriculum, high academic standards and strong student mentorship, career readiness and placement outcomes.

41. BEST SOLUTION PROVIDER/VENDOR

41A. Media Monitoring

41B. AI-automation Resource

41C. Media Database and Intelligence

41D. Analytics

A PR/comms solution provider/vendor that demonstrates how its tool/platform is best in class and the meaningful impacts it has delivered for its clients and the industry.

42. BEST AI INTEGRATION AND DIGITAL INNOVATIONS

42A. In-house

42B. Agency

Demonstrate the exceptional creativity, effectiveness, and ingenuity in leveraging digital innovations, particularly artificial intelligence, to revolutionize your organization's PR/comms strategies and results. Provide examples of the successful implementation of AI-driven technologies that have significantly enhanced visibility, engagement, efficiencies and overall PR performance.