Guidelines 2026

Celebrating Best Practices

The Best in the West Awards exist to shine a light on, and develop a repository of, Best Practices in key areas of Business Improvement Areas vital work in downtowns, main streets and commercial districts.

Our Overarching Values

We are seeking nominations which are:

Innovative – building on the most effective, impactful, or outcomes-based practices is important to BIAs. Your submission is based on building innovative operations.

Sustainable – sustainability is a dual concept, operationally, does the project you are submitting lead to long term stability or success for the BIA? Or, externally, does it build on community practices that build a higher level of environmental, social, or community functionality.

Relationship Building – the pursuit of positive and functional relationships is at the heart of what we do as BIAs. Your project advances the quality of your relationships with others.

Categories

1. **Community Leadership**
    - **Community Programming** – A program or service for our members or community which enhances our position as a community leader. Examples include community safety or service projects, E.D.I. projects (see below)
    - **Advocacy** – projects where we take a leadership role in advocating for our embers or communities and achieve positive results
    - **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** - projects which enhance the EDI of our neigbourhoods

2. **Events and Marketing**
    - **Events**

        Examples:
        - Community Festivals and recreational style events that bring community together and create a stronger sense of vibrancy,
        - Recruitment Events (Business and developer) – tradeshows, events, or actions which are focused on attracting and retaining businesses and developers to our areas. underscored by measurable goals,
        - Environmental Sustainability – projects which lead to greater environmental outcomes for our members and our communities,
        - Placemaking – projects that create vibrant spaces which bring communities together and create a deeper connection between our members and community.
    - **Marketing**

        Examples:
        - **Tradeshows** (outward focused)
        - **Promotions or Marketing campaigns** which are designed to attract or inform our communities about who we are, what we offer, and what we do in service to our community. (Media, Print, Posters, Banners, Contests etc.)

3. **External Relations / Public Relations**
    - **Advocacy** – projects which build the BIAs influence or positive impact in the community, covering a wide range of actions we undertake:

        Examples:
        - Community Planning – formal planning processes and outcomes,
        - Partnerships
        - Business recruitment and retention
        - Developer recruitment and attraction
    - **Environmental Sustainability** (economic, social) – projects in which we work with other to leverage our input and influence in support of broader community. Submitted projects should be your contributory actions and materials, and how they support the broader project.

4. **Organizational (Operational) Excellence**
    - **Governance** – Programs, processes or protocols that improve or governance or governance structure, Board development or Policy and operations
    - **Member Engagement** – working with our members to create greater engagement in what the BIA is and does and to raise awareness and understanding of the BIA

- **Organizational Reporting** – projects which enhance the type, style and impacts of the reporting we do for members,
- **Strategic and Implementation Planning**, projects that outline the strategic plan, and achievements related to it.
- **Financial Supports or Operations** – projects which create greater economic depth and opportunities for the BIA to provide service to our member of community. Leverage grants, contribution agreements, innovative financial programming.

Application Process

1) Each project can only be submitted in one category.
2) Projects should have been completed or initiated between June 2024 and June 2025.
3) Each submission shall be measured against the specific measurable outcomes (KPIs) identified by the applicant.
4) Only Awards of Excellence are awarded each year.
5) The primary consideration of the judging panel is how innovative the project is within the category.
6) The focus of the program is:
    a. Key Performance Indicators (up to 3) being clearly identified and achieved
    b. Compatibility with the overarching values of Innovation, Sustainability and Relationship Building
    c. Sharing Best Practices

Key Dates

Application process opens:	January 15, 2026
Submission Deadline	April 20, 2026
Awards Presented	May 26, 2026