



# Award Winning Application FAQs

Every year, NEAFCS receives numerous award applications from our members. Some programs are selected as national winners, while others are not. Why do some award applications succeed where others do not? Hopefully, this will help guide your award application to the top!

## What are the guidelines for applying for awards?

Award criteria and the application process are on the NEAFCS Web Site at [neafcs.org](http://neafcs.org). Select and click on the Awards category on the home page, and you will get the main page for Awards and Recognition.

Go to the Awards Manual. First review the General Eligibility Requirements of the Awards Manual. These requirements apply to all awards categories. Next, select the award you are interested in applying for to obtain more information about what is needed to successfully submit your application.

Make sure you carefully follow the specific guidelines and criteria, i.e., years of service, etc. These are different for each award and individuals who do not follow the guidelines will be disqualified.

## How do I know which Awards category works best for my program?

Not all programs fit in all categories. Try to find the right award for your program. If you have questions, please contact your affiliate Vice President for Awards and Recognition.

## Do all awards need a letter of recommendation?

No. Requirements for some awards have changed so check the Awards Manual carefully to see if your award application requires a letter of recommendation.

## How do I apply with the on-line award application?

The on-line award application simplifies the award application process for members and Affiliate Awards Chairs. Only award applications submitted on-line will be accepted.

## How do I submit a team application?

**Important Note: Individual and team entries are judged as one group.** There are not separate individual and team awards in any awards category. If you are entering a team application, you will be able to insert team member names on the on-line award application. Please make sure that names are spelled correctly. The online application has spaces for 20 team members. If a team has more than 20 members, in space 20, put additional team members listed in application. List additional team members on first page of the program outline. Additional team members cannot be added after the March 15 awards deadline.

### What is important to emphasize in my award application?

**Impact!** This is much more important than the number of participants that were involved. How did this program make a difference? Is the information current? Highlight impact accomplishments first. What are the educational aspects of the program? Why is your program important? What did the participants learn? Did they gain new skills? Were there behavior changes? Make sure your award application shows that your program made a difference to the people it reached!

**Evaluation!** Make sure you know how to interpret the evaluations. In the past, judges have noted a lack of interpretation of the evaluation or understanding of the impact on the audience. How did the research impact an Extension program? Did you base your project on existing research? Make sure you can detail how your program applied the related research. Are the results valid? What was the sample population? What are the demographics of the community? Is it rural or urban? Fifty participants in an urban area might not sound impressive, but 50 participants in a rural location might be half of the clientele! Use actual percentages, not statements such as “a few” or “most”. List results in frequency value of percentages. Make sure your evaluation and/or impact data are understandable.

### What else can I do to send in a winning application?

Be creative! Make your application worth reading. Plan ahead to give yourself enough time to revise and rewrite. Proof read your application! Many times, the judges have a difficult time deciding how to rank the entries. Spelling errors, sloppy applications, or grammatical errors sometimes are the deciding factor for points awarded. Have someone proof your application. Before you send, double-check your grammar, style, and the ease of understanding the points you are trying to make. Be neat. Send it in on time!

Make sure the points you make in your application fit the award for which you are applying. For instance, if you are applying for the **Program of Excellence through Research Award**, make sure your application includes supporting information about using the results of the research in future Extension programs. **Radio** spots need to have a personal feel, not sound like a programmed lecture. Try to avoid using strict scripts. **Community Programs** need to show collaboration, not co-sponsorship; with impact shown, not just the number of participants. **Newsletters** need quality style and format, with strong and interesting content so the reader will read it to the end.

### How much do I need to document as references?

It is fine to use all kinds of resources for the information put together, but they all need to be identified. Judges need to know what was adapted, what was revised, and what was written by the applicant(s).

Make sure to specify how much was written by the applicant(s) and how much was adapted, as well as which part of the curriculum was not original. Make sure your reference list is written in the correct format. Some judges may lower your score if your references list is not written in the correct way.

## Should I send extra materials to help support my application?

Please make sure to follow the specifications as outlined in the Awards Manual. Support information sent that is not required or exceeds the page requirements will not be judged and may result in a lower score.

## What is the 30 word summary for?

The 30 word summary is used to prepare the Annual Session script for recognition of award winners. The summary is not included in the judging process. It is important that you follow the word count guidelines. If the summary is edited, it may not emphasize the award winners' successes in the preferred manner. Please use the word count in your word processing program or count the words manually. It is also important that members use original and creative descriptions for their word summary. Although it is helpful to look at past award booklets to get an idea how to write a summary, it is more important that your 30 word summary is as original as your work.

## How do I submit my application online?

1. Award applications should be uploaded to the NEAFCS website. Please follow appropriate guidelines:
  - Each award may include up to three (3) files.
  - Each file may be no larger than 25 MB.
  - Materials to be submitted should be merged, including: awards application, program outline, supplemental materials (including photo), as well as links for newsletters, curriculum, blogs, etc.

To Upload a File:

- Scroll to "File(s) Upload".
- Beside "File Upload #1", click on the "Upload" button. *(A pop up screen for your computer files should appear.) [Please note: if you do not have a button that says "Upload", your Java is disabled. Please contact your IT person or try to access the online system through another browser or a computer that is not on your work network.]*
- Select the file you have created. No files larger than 25 MB may be uploaded.
- The file you have selected should now appear on the awards submission page directly under "File Upload #1".
- Repeat this process for "File Upload #2" and "File Upload #3", if necessary. No more than one file may be uploaded under each "File Upload". No more than three (3) files may be uploaded to the awards application.

The email confirmation sent after your award is submitted lists the uploaded files.

## What does the judging sheet mean?

Entries are given scores, much like the judging process for 4-H'ers at the county fair! Different categories in the application are judged, such as meeting page requirements, year requirements, impact of program, neatness of application, etc. These are all given point values, which are then added together for the final score. This is not the same as test scores – there is no "passing" or "failing". This helps the

applications to be ranked for regional and national awards.

Award winners must receive an average score of 85 points or more to be a national winner, and an average score of 80 points or more for regional recognition. For awards with first, second and third place national winners, there will be first, second and third place regional winners.

### **Any other last-minute suggestions?**

Make sure you know your affiliate submission deadline. Since the VP for Awards & Recognition must have all applications entered online by March 15<sup>th</sup>, be mindful of when you have to get your application to your affiliate Awards VP. We are very fortunate to have sponsors for our awards.

Is there something you can correct on your application and send it in again next year? Don't give up. We are all winners with NEAFCS, and every year, we get to try again!

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Contact your state affiliate Vice President or the National Vice President for Awards and Recognition with any further questions.