



Applying for Awards is a Win-Win for Extension Professionals

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An article in *The Journal of Extension* states, “Awards are the most conventionally accepted method for proving to others that your work is necessary, complete and effective”. As affiliate and national deadlines for award applications are looming, let’s explore the additional benefits of applying for awards. Besides the obvious of being acknowledged by your peers as the best in your field, applying for awards brings a variety of benefits. Putting together an award application can help you to reflect on your skills and progress. In some instances, it may encourage you to become more competitive by filling gaps in your curriculum vitae. As we compete for funding, time and other resources, applying for awards also creates an opportunity to garner program support.

Of course, the goal is to win an award. But even if you don’t win, competing for an award is still a worthwhile endeavor that will help you further your professional development. One of the greatest benefits of preparing an award application is that it encourages self-assessment. This involves thinking about how you are developing skills and experiences that can be applied in a variety of ways. This sort of self-reflection is a great tool to have throughout your career. Studying the award criteria and looking at past winners may help you to get a sense of what you want to strive towards to accomplish and identify skill gaps. In short, it provides a roadmap for getting the award and places you in a prime position for future career planning.

Applying for an award also requires us to streamline and adequately highlight concrete evidence of achievements. Getting advice from your Affiliate VP for Awards about how to do this can be invaluable. You can also get great information from past awards winners. To see past award winners visit: <https://www.neafcs.org/award-winners>.

Applying for an award may seem to be a self-serving act. In reality, it is an excellent way to secure program support. Administration, external funders and community partners often fund and support programs with the greatest potential for success. Awards are documented proof your program addressed client needs, had clear program objectives and evaluated the program impact.

Finally, applying for an award can be time-consuming and must be balanced with programming, reporting and seemingly a million other responsibilities. So, apply strategically. This year's awards are due March 16th (please check with your affiliate for your state's deadline. It maybe earlier). Do you have something to shout about?