

**TENNESSEE ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS**  
**Awards of Excellence Guidelines**

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**Submission Deadline: December 15, 2023**  
**NO DEADLINE EXTENSIONS**

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**Purpose:** The TAM Awards of Excellence recognize, encourage, and promote excellence within the Tennessee museum community, and focus public attention on the outstanding programs, projects, and services offered by Tennessee museums. Awards are not competitive and are based on individual accomplishments and achievements.

**Awards of Excellence** will be given for an *outstanding and exemplary* accomplishment, as defined in these guidelines, by an institution or organization in Tennessee whose primary purpose includes preservation and/or interpretation in natural history, cultural history, folklore, humanities, art and/or science.

**Awards of Commendation** will be given for nominations that don't meet the criteria defined for an Award of Excellence but still warrant recognition.

**General Guidelines**

- Only current members (institutional or individual) of TAM **in good standing** are eligible to receive awards.
- For most categories, each nominated project must have **originated, occurred, and/or been completed** in 2023. Long-term permanent exhibitions must have **opened** in 2023.
  - Temporary exhibitions or programs that opened **BETWEEN November 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022** AND occurred for most or all of 2023 are eligible for nomination. This also includes holiday-specific exhibits open for a short period of time.
- A \$15 entry fee is required for **each nomination**. Entry fees cover printing, postage and supplemental costs associated with the awards. Institutions will be invoiced for the number of nominations via email. Payment can be made via PayPal, or by check. **Payment deadline is March 1. Payment not received by March 1 may disqualify the nomination.**
- Institutions may nominate themselves or be nominated by other organizations, individuals, or businesses. Individuals may be nominated only by TAM members or institutions.
- A nomination may be made in only one category or sub-category. For example, an educational event may be nominated in either the "Educational Programming" category or the "Special Events" category, but not in both categories.
- Only one nomination per institution per category is allowed. For example, one institution may not submit two nominations in the "Temporary Exhibition" category. If

more than one nomination is received, the Awards Committee may choose to move the nomination to a different category if possible, or disqualify the second entry.

- The nomination should represent an **extraordinary achievement**, as opposed to an **ongoing and/or recurring** program or normal operating situation.
- Fill out the nomination form completely with as much detailed information as possible within the given word limits. Photos are strongly encouraged.

### Judging

- There are 5 criteria listed under Nomination Information, with each assigned a percentage of the total score. Committee members will score each criterion on a 1-5 scale based on its description and associated supporting materials. The total will be averaged and a final number given for each nomination.
  - **Nominations scoring from 5 to 4.5 will receive an Award of Excellence.**
  - **Nominations scoring from 4.49 to 3.75 will receive an Award of Commendation.**

### Nomination Form and Submission Guidelines

#### Electronic Submission (preferred)

- Visit [www.tnmuseums.org](http://www.tnmuseums.org) and locate the Awards Nomination Form
- Complete the form, add attachments and submit; you should receive an email saying your submission was received. If not, reach out to [tnmuseums@gmail.com](mailto:tnmuseums@gmail.com)
- Attach the following supporting materials with the nomination:
  - Digital images/ docs / pdfs – up to 10; up to 20 for Blockbuster Exhibit
  - Digital images of building and institutional logo
  - Digital press coverage links or PDFs – up to 5
- Nominations in the “Publications” and “Special / Novelty” category should have actual hard copies mailed to **TAM, PO Box 330984, Nashville TN, 37203** for in-hand judging purposes. Contact your representative with any questions.

#### Mail Submission

- Visit [www.tnmuseums.org](http://www.tnmuseums.org), download, print and fill out the nomination form
- Submit original form, any hard copies of supporting materials, hard copies of any “Publications” nominated, and a flash drive (non-returnable) with the following:
  - Digital images/ docs / pdfs – up to 10; up to 20 for Blockbuster Exhibit
  - Digital images of building and institutional logo
  - Digital press coverage links or PDFs – up to 5
- Mail to **TAM, PO Box 330984, Nashville TN, 37203. All materials should be received no later than December 15, 2023.**
- Contact your representative with any questions.

**A Note on Photos:** Please keep in mind Awards Committee members may not have been to your institution and may not have seen or be familiar with your nomination. In order for us to fairly judge your nomination, we must be able to visualize what has taken place. Your pictures need to tell your story. Please ensure photos are large enough to be seen clearly, and please provide context with any photos to explain what is happening in the images.

**All forms and support materials must be received by December 15, 2023.  
There will be no extension of the deadline!**

### **INSTITUTIONAL SIZE CLASSIFICATIONS**

Museums will be classified in one of six categories based on the size of their budget, including operating monies and salaries. The Awards Committee will especially consider the accomplishments relative to the resources available to the organization.

1. \$50,000 or less
2. \$50,000—\$200,000
3. \$200,000—\$500,00
4. \$500,000—\$1M
5. \$1M - \$5M
6. \$5M or more

### **CATEGORIES / SUBCATEGORIES**

Awards may be made in each of the following categories in the six institutional size classes. Submission in the appropriate category is the responsibility of the nominator. Submissions may be re-categorized or disqualified at the discretion of the Awards Committee if not in the correct category.

**If you are uncertain about what category to submit in, or have any questions, please reach out to your area representative!**

**EXHIBITIONS** – In general, the exhibition must have opened in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case, 2023. **Temporary exhibitions that opened BETWEEN November 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022 AND occurred for most or all of 2023 are eligible for nomination.** This includes seasonal / holiday themed exhibits that may run for just a few months. Nomination cannot be an annual or recurring occurrence and must be unique in its exhibition.

- **Permanent Exhibit:** Long-term exhibits (5 years or more) installed and opened in 2023.
- **Temporary Exhibit:** Original exhibits or displays produced in-house for a limited period of time.
  - Also eligible are traveling exhibits (rentals) that are **significantly** augmented by the nominee with additional research, content, artifacts, etc. If merely hosting an exhibit, it is not eligible for nomination.

- The nomination for a rented **exhibit should emphasize the nominee's original contributions to the project.**
- **Blockbuster:** Major temporary exhibitions of extraordinary and/or unusual size, expense, or lavish production created in-house
- **Traveling Exhibit:** Exhibit created by the nominee that tours to other locations.

**PUBLICATIONS** – The nominated publication must have been produced or published in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023. A significant portion of work on publications should have been done in-house vs by outside contractors (ie: text, layout, design, editing, etc.) Please note what was done internally vs what was done by outside contractors. Hard copies of publications should be mailed to **TAM, PO Box 330984, Nashville TN, 37203** for judging purposes.

- **Book / Catalogue** - bound text with or without pictures
- **Gallery Guide** – to accompany an exhibition
- **Papers, Periodicals and Posters** – posters, invitations, rack cards, brochures, etc

**AUDIO-VISUAL** – The nominated element must have been produced in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023.

- **Audio Tour**
- **Film/Documentary**
- **Exhibit Component**

#### **DIGITAL MEDIA**

The nominated platform must have either been created or reformatted, or had significant content added in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023. A significant portion of work should have been done in-house vs by an outside contractor (ie: text, content, layout, design, etc.) Please note what was done internally vs what was done by an outside contractor on designated space on the application.

- **Website** - Nomination can be for all or a portion of the website.
- **Social Media Page/ Campaign** (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc)
- **Podcast**
- **Digital Collections**
- **Blog / Video Blog / YouTube series**

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING** – The nominated program must have originated and occurred in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023.

- **School Programming**  
Examples include school outreach programs, home school programs, children's workbooks, teacher's manuals, teacher workshops, programs geared to school groups,

etc

- **Public Programming**

Examples include a packaged program that involves an exhibition, interpretive events (historical dramatizations, living history programs, etc.), a lecture or film series, an outreach or in-house program to special audiences such as children or Scouts, interpretive programs, etc

An annual or recurring program may be nominated if the current year's program was **significantly different** from previous ones; the nomination must explain why the current year's program was a unique accomplishment.

**SPECIAL EVENTS – The nominated event must have originated and occurred in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023.** Examples include a one-time promotional or exhibit-related event, a one-time celebration of a local or wider event, holiday tours, conferences, concerts, etc. An annual or recurring event may be nominated if the current year's event was **significantly different** from previous ones; the nomination must explain why the current year's event was a unique accomplishment.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION – The nominated occurrence must have taken place in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023.** Examples include marketing or membership campaigns, research projects, oral history projects, etc.

**SPECIAL OR NOVELTY ITEM** - t-shirts, street banners, coffee mugs, etc – items produced, designed or commissioned by the organization or institution; mass-produced or bought-in products are not eligible

**FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS –** The nominated campaign must have originated and occurred in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023. Ongoing campaigns are allowed to be nominated if they originated in the current calendar year, but can only be nominated once. It must be noted what the campaign is fundraising for and why

**FOR THE FOLLOWING NOMINATIONS, PLEASE FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Fill out the Nomination Form **UP TO** Nomination Information.
- Submit a narrative giving the nominees' information (name or group), nomination category and institution, along with the volunteer, individual, community member or organization's contributions to your organization and why they are exceptional. Word limit for nomination is 500 words.
- Submit up to 10 photos / supporting documents, including a photo of the nominee.
- Email all to the TAM Awards Chair at [awards@tnmuseums.org](mailto:awards@tnmuseums.org)

**VOLUNTEERISM –** The nominated individuals or groups must have contributed significant support in the calendar year for which the award will be given, in this case 2023. Cumulative

support as an individual volunteer will be taken into consideration, but the nomination must explain why the volunteer's contribution in 2023 is significant.

- Individuals
- In-house Volunteer programs
- Outside Group Volunteer Projects

Examples include individuals, corporations, organizations, volunteer groups, or programs that have provided outstanding volunteer support. Nominees can be in-house volunteers or groups, or outside groups brought in for special events, programs or projects.

### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT – Limited annually to one award per Grand Division**

For organizations or museums that show outstanding support to their local community through thoughtful or impactful events, fundraisers, exhibits or programs.

#### EXAMPLES:

- a museum that honors a community member with a plaque, statue, or other special recognition;
- a museum that raises funds for a community member or group in need;
- a museum that hosts a free day for the community to say thanks for their support, etc

\*NOTE – for communities that support museums through similar means, nominate either under Special Recognition, or Institutional Impact

### **INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT – Limited annually to one award per Grand Division**

For staff, individuals or community members that go above and beyond to significantly impact the organization in a way that elevates it to another level.

#### EXAMPLES:

- Long time museum staff or board member and their contributions to the museum;
- community member that has made significant impact through service, donations, or other means; etc

**EMERGING PROFESSIONALS AWARD** – This board-voted award recognizes the emerging professionals that help cultivate success at your institution. Individuals should have less than 5 years of service in the museum field and should have distinguished themselves by showing exceptional promise and potential in the field. They must be currently employed by or working/interning for a TAM Institutional Member, or a graduate student in a history-related program. **Submit the nominee's information, place of employment, distinguishing accomplishments and contributions, photo, and a letter of support to the TAM Coordinator at [tnmuseums@gmail.com](mailto:tnmuseums@gmail.com)**