

# Guide to creating a winning entry



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The HPMA team have award winners, judges and programme producers in their midst so together we have distilled advice, tips and hints to help you and your team along the road to awards success.

Being shortlisted is great for staff morale and patient confidence, but of course it takes time and effort so this guide is designed to ensure you maximise your chances of success.

We'll take you through each step of the process - hopefully - to that golden envelope moment, and your win!

Work on an awards entry is a good opportunity to develop a productive relationship with the communications team in your organisation. Your project write up should have a place within the communications strategy – sharing the impact of your work internally and in the wider community.

It's better to choose a small number of projects to enter and resource the crafting of the entries well.



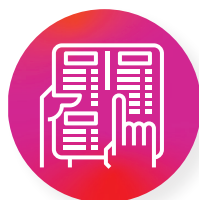
## STEP ONE: CHOOSE YOUR PROJECT

Entering an award takes time and energy (plus some financial commitment from your employer) so it's worth pausing before you start to make sure you are maximising your chances.

**Before you begin, ask yourself and your team these key questions:**

1. Is the project that's engaging us at the moment the right one to enter?
2. Do we have enough evidence of outcomes?
3. Do we have an older project which we have forgotten about because it's running along nicely, but which has now got loads of data about outcomes?

That older project may just be the right one to run with.



## STEP TWO: CHOOSE THE CATEGORY

Think carefully about the award category you enter. Don't automatically opt for the more general themes, and think how your project might fit into one of the less obvious, perhaps more specialised, ones too.

Read through the details of all the categories where your project would be eligible. Take a close look at the criteria and the submission questions to ensure your project fits and has the evidence required, or you can find the necessary evidence.

You may enter as many categories as you like, but not with the same project.

Your director will have to sign off the entry so get their approval (and help) as soon as possible. It would be a shame to have done all the work only to be told by your director as the entry deadline approaches that you can't enter it.

Think about the work involved and, with colleagues, plot a timeline so you don't leave it all until the last minute. Remember to build in time for a review once the almost final draft is produced.

A colleague with experience as a judge or award wins (nationally or locally), not necessarily in your profession, is a good person to take a critical eye. It's good for networking and sharing your good practice within the organisation not to mention a source of challenging feedback. You could also talk to a mentor or branch colleague.



## STEP THREE: GET WRITING

Be clear on your key project messages – what do you want the judges to know? Collate all the potential evidence you have to hand – qualitative and quantitative data. To reach this position make sure you involve the wider team's ideas, expertise and knowledge – can you benchmark your impact with numbers? You will need to edit down to match powerful evidence to each key message.

Answer the questions carefully, sticking to the word counts. Give brief and clear examples of the 'what' and 'how' in the way you approached the project. Give clear evidence and examples of how you have measured the impact of your work and what you consider 'success' to be.

We ask for a 50 word summary of your project. Spend time polishing this up and get it as succinct and punchy as you can. It must of course accurately summarise your work, but it is also a sales pitch that should get the reader engaged straight off.

The title is important too. It should be brief enough to work as a title but clear enough to capture what the project is all about. Beware of puns and ambiguity.

Some categories allow extra information to be submitted alongside your written responses. Choose wisely and respect the file size limits.

Thoroughly check your entry form before submission, and ask a colleague – a critical friend - to take a look too.

And remember you can enter as many projects into the awards programme as you like.

Leave ample time to submit your entry online. In the last hours of the online call for submissions, we see huge increases in traffic; which can cause IT problems. Making your submission days before the deadline will give you peace of mind and ensure you can contact the awards team and plan alternative submission strategies if you need to.

Keep an eye out on communications from the Awards team for deadline extensions or submission advice – and don't forget to put the judging panel date in your diary

Don't forget to call the awards team if you have a query **020 8334 4500**



## HOW TO MAKE YOUR ENTRY STAND OUT

Remember that by the time the judges get to reading your entry, they may have already sifted through 40 others, so make yours stand out

- Tell a good story: write your project summary as though you are writing a really good story. The beginning should set out the objectives clearly. The middle should explain the strategy, and the end should reveal the results. A narrative to illustrate a transformation is most powerful; the difference you have made to patients, colleagues or the wider community.
- Find the headline data you can use to illustrate and support your submission, and ensure they are up to date!
- Source testimonials that you can weave into your submission to evidence your impact.
- Keep it simple: as many judges say: “less is sometimes more”. Avoid jargon and flowery language.
- Check for typos, grammatical mistakes and spelling.
- First impressions count: so make an instant impact with the 50 word summary and the title
- Stick to the truth: don’t exaggerate, lie or include spurious claims, as judges will see through them.
- Involve the whole team: make the entry a joint effort which will often produce a better, more comprehensive summary, as well as making the story more interesting.
- Be ruthless when redrafting: once you’ve written your rough draft submission, read it over several times and cut out superfluous information. This will make it much clearer. It’s also a good idea to get someone who hasn’t been directly involved to cast their fresh eyes over it to double-check clarity.
- After addressing the category criteria, don’t forget to tell the judges any unique selling points your projects holds – as a membership association we hope to celebrate industry firsts, no/low budget solutions, easily replicated projects or schemes that address a critical need many are faced with.



## STEP 4: YOU'VE BEEN SHORTLISTED!

This means you are one of three or four that the shortlisting judges have selected to appear before the judging panel. So you are a finalist and will be mentioned at the ceremony, but you haven't won yet.

Pause for a moment or two and think about how you can turn a shortlisted entry into a winning entry.

- First put yourself in the judges' shoes: a whole day of interviewing and listening to finalists talk about their entries. They could be doing 9 or even 12 during the day – that's hard work. So make their job a little easier:
- Be enthusiastic: if you can't, don't expect them to be.
- You will of course be nervous – everyone is. But find ways of turning nerves into energy and focus; and rehearse endlessly so it looks effortless.
- Look again at the criteria for your category as that is what the judges will be marking you on.
- Make it as easy as possible for them to tick the boxes. Evidence of patient involvement needed? Tell them how you did it? Can the project be sustained? Tell them how it already has been and what's planned for the future.
- Be clear and succinct in your answers to the judging panel questions as time is limited; what matters is what you have to say and how you say it.
- When speaking think about your body language, how will you radiate enthusiasm, professionalism and winning qualities?
- Think about what the judges might ask you and prepare the answers. Some like to end with the question: and why do you think you are the winner? No time for false modesty here: rehearse a devastatingly good answer.

## FIVE MOST COMMON CRITICISMS THAT JUDGES MAKE:



Not enough evidence of evaluation



Lack of awareness of the bigger picture



Lack of awareness of the work of others in the field.



Too soon to judge success



Lack of patient involvement

## AND HERE ARE SOME OF THE ACTUAL THINGS JUDGES HAVE SAID ABOUT WINNING ENTRIES:



The team's passion was amazing, they have lived and breathed this project. Their commitment was outstanding.



Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration - this project crossed so many professional boundaries



The organisation found room for the team to genuinely shape how things are done from the most junior level - exemplary



We quickly realised the scale of the project's impact - unforgettable patient stories.



The team translated their vision into objectives at every level - and simply delivered.



The story of the project failures was gripping - a project team full of inspiring practitioners that just did not give up.



## STEP 5: WAITING FOR THE RESULTS

After shortlisting and the judging day, there's an agonising few weeks when you are waiting for the results, announced at the awards ceremony. Use the time to make the most of your status as a finalist – that's a strong place to be. You might not be a winner yet but neither are you a runner-up.

So brief your communication department about your finalist status so that they can spread the word internally and to their external media contacts. Use the 'I've been shortlisted' logo that you will have been sent on your emails. Get Tweeting.

If your project has a commercial partner, they will want to share the celebrations so don't forget to encourage them to join you – they may even be in a position to sponsor places at the ceremony.



## STEP 6: THE DAY ARRIVES

All the finalists are special on the awards day – all the teams and project summaries will be mentioned in the script and in the Winners' Guide, published after the ceremony. So your project has gone public and your work has been recognised.

When you are announced as the winner, it's a golden moment! Everyone is chatting, colleagues are tweeting and all eyes are on you. Make sure your communications people back at work know and share the good news.

When the excitement has died down a bit, after the ceremony, talk to colleagues about how to further spread the word. Can your work be written up as a journal or HPMA newsletter article? An experience piece for something like the Guardian's From the front line feature? Conference or seminar presentations? Don't wait to be asked, offer to write or present. After all you are a winner.

**Congratulations!**



## CONTACT US

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For sponsorship opportunities on the HPMA Awards  
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