



2026

ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS & OVERVIEW

New in 2026!

Defining "Program" vs. "Event"

In the context of ADMEI's Awards Program, it's important to distinguish between an event and a program:

An **event** refers to a single function or experience within a larger scope—such as a welcome reception, gala dinner, team-building activity, or awards ceremony. It has a specific purpose, location, and timeframe.

A **program** encompasses a series of coordinated events designed to achieve an overarching goal—such as an incentive trip, multi-day conference, product launch, or corporate retreat. Programs typically span multiple days and involve several distinct events, each contributing to a unified theme or objective.

Best Décor & Design divided into two categories:

Best Décor & Design (Event)

Best Décor & Design (Event) recognizes excellence and originality in the decorative elements of a **single event** within a program. Entries should highlight how design components—such as theme décor, props, scenery, draping, furniture, linens, or rentals—contributed to the overall look, feel, and impact of that one event. This category focuses on individual event execution rather than a design thread carried across multiple experiences.

Best Décor & Design (Program)

Best Décor & Design (Program) honors exceptional creativity and cohesive design execution **across a multi-event program**. This category celebrates the thoughtful integration of decorative elements that enhance the overall attendee experience and reflect a unifying theme or brand throughout multiple touchpoints. Submissions should demonstrate how design choices—from scenic elements and furniture to floral, lighting, props, and signage—worked together to create a seamless visual journey across the program's components.

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OVERVIEW

Established in 2005, the **ADMEI Awards Program** recognizes member excellence in Destination Management Company (DMC) programs, component development, and delivery. Panels of international industry professionals judge submissions, and the award winners are celebrated annually at the Awards Gala held during the ADMEI Annual Conference on 3 March 2026 at the Costa Rica Marriott Hacienda Belen. The ADMEI Awards Program features two categories: Achievement and Recognition. There is also an option to submit Achievement Award entries for public People's Choice Voting.

RULES & REQUIREMENTS

Awards Entry

All submissions **must** be made online via the ADMEI Awards Site, which will open the week of 10 August 2025. Visit www.admei.org/awards on or after 10 August 2025 to access a link to the site, which will also be added to the left column of My ADMEI.

Deadline

All submissions must be received by midnight Eastern on 23 September 2025.

Qualifying Entries

All programs submitted for the 2026 ADMEI Awards Program must have occurred between 1 September 2024 and 31 August 2025 and **must have taken place in the DMC's local destination (if in-person) or virtually**. Programs, where the DMC traveled with its client, are not eligible for an ADMEI Award unless the traveling member DMC collaborated with a local DMC member.

Eligibility

ADMEI DMC Members in good standing are eligible to submit for ADMEI Awards. The DMC must have played an integral role in developing the event, program, or activity being submitted which must have taken place in the DMC's local destination. Programs where the DMC traveled with its client are not eligible for an ADMEI Award unless it collaborated with a local DMC member in the program's destination.

ADMEI members may submit an entry for themselves or another Destination Management professional for an ADMEI Recognition Award.

Entry Fees & Deadlines

SUBMISSION DEADLINE	ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS	PEOPLE'S CHOICE	RECOGNITION AWARDS
23 September 2025	\$300 USD	\$50	\$0

Submit entry before midnight Eastern 8 September 2025 and save \$50 on Achievement Award Entries!
Enter Promo Code: Early26

There are no entry fees for Recognition Award nominations.

Disqualifications

Entries will be disqualified for failing to comply with the stated rules (event location, item counts, file sizes, entry deadlines, video length, etc.). Entrants will have the opportunity to purchase a **Disqualification (DQ) Review** for each entry. The fee for this review is \$50. Entrants will be notified by email if any DQ items are identified and will have 48 hours to correct and resubmit the entry.

Client Approval

A client approval letter is no longer required to be included in the entry. Instead, the submission form contains the following language that must be acknowledged to activate the Submit Entry button.

By submission of this application, we agree, represent, and warrant that we have permission and authorization to disclose the information and images attached to this application for use by ADMEI in any further publication or utilization of the information and images, including but not limited to parties' names, trademarks or service marks and all other intellectual property in any advertising, publication, or news release. We agree that we have the prior written consent of the client and others in support of this application and the representations and warranties contained in it. We shall indemnify, hold harmless, and defend ADMEI, its officers, directors, employees, and agents from any and all claims, demands, and reckonings that may arise from any app or omission on ADMEI's utilization, publication, and distribution of the information and images contained in the application.

Judging

Judges from around the world who are familiar with DMCs (association and corporate planners, hoteliers, venues, photographers, production companies, agencies, etc.) are divided into panels and assigned categories to judge.

- Judges must sign a confidential agreement before receiving access to award submission materials.
- Judges remain anonymous throughout the process, and their decisions are final.
- Judges' scorecards are confidential and remain the property of ADMEI.
- Judging takes place in October 2025.

Finalists' Notification

Finalists will be notified on or before 20 November 2025.

Awards Presentations

The 2026 ADMEI Awards will be presented during the annual Awards Gala on 3 March 2026 at Costa Rica Marriott Belen in La Ribera de Belen Heredia, Costa Rica.

Additional Questions?

Submit additional questions via email to val@admei.org.

2026 AWARD CATEGORIES

Achievement Awards

Identifies DMCs that excel in Destination Management services based on specific criteria.

Defining "Program" vs. "Event"

In the context of ADMEI's Awards Program, it's important to distinguish between an event and a program:

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Best Destination Marketing

Best Destination Marketing recognizes a DMC's ability to showcase its destination, including, but not limited to, a unique site visit experience, FAM trip, or destination reveal. Marketing efforts can be in person or virtual, and DMC managed solo or collaborated with a hotel or Destination Organization.

Best DEIA Initiative

Best Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Initiative recognizes a DMC that utilizes diversity intelligence to incorporate inclusion, accessibility, and belonging through vendor/supplier diversity, program content, activity selection, or other measures to foster an inclusive environment and experience for a client program.

Best Entertainment Production

Best Entertainment Production honors excellence in entertainment production and services including, but not limited to, procuring, producing, choreographing, and designing overall event entertainment for any type of program or event.

Best Event - Based on Budget

Best Event recognizes a DMC's ability to plan and execute an event that achieves the client's goals and objectives. This category refers to a single event and its integration of at least one (1) of the core DMC services: transportation, tours/activities, event management, program logistics, and entertainment.

- Best Event – \$100,000 USD or less
- Best Event – \$100,001 - \$250,000 USD
- Best Event – \$250,001 - \$500,000 USD
- Best Event - \$500,001 - \$1,000,000 USD
- Best Event – Over \$1,000,000 USD

The event budget is required for the Best Event category and will not be made public. It must include all services and components managed by the DMC.

Best Group Activity

Best Group Activity recognizes a DMC's creativity in providing a team building, tour, or CSR activity.

Best Incentive Program

Best Incentive Program recognizes excellence in the creation and execution of an incentive travel program or service.

Best Logistics

Best Logistics highlights a DMC's detailed coordination of a complex operation within a program. Not limited to transportation, this category includes anything required to execute a logistically challenging element of an event or program.

Best Community Event

Best Community Event recognizes creativity in designing and delivering an open-to-the-public event, including, but not limited to, festivals, walks/runs, wellness fairs, product launches, game-day experiences, activations, or other activities/events that engage attendees in the local culture, flavor, and traditions of the destination.

Best Emergency Preparedness and/or Response

Best Emergency Preparedness and/or Response showcases a DMC's excellence in mitigating risks during the planning cycle and/or responsiveness to incidents occurring during the live event. Entries should include the comprehensive emergency plans created and details of the steps taken to develop, or the detailed steps taken to respond to a crisis or issue during the event.

Best Six-Week Challenge Event

Best Six-Week Challenge showcases a DMC's ability to execute an event within six (6) weeks or less from RFP to execution.

Best Sustainable Initiatives

Best Sustainable Initiatives highlights a unique way that a DMC considers the social, environmental, and/or economic dimensions of sustainability throughout the planning and execution of a program or event.

- Social - Fostering a sense of community, inclusivity, and attendee well-being such as Diversity and Inclusion Programs, Accessible Facilities, Community Engagement, Volunteer Opportunities
- Environmental - Minimizing the environmental impact by reducing resource consumption, minimizing waste generations, and promoting conservation efforts such as Zero Waste Initiatives, Carbon Offsetting, Green Transportation Options, and Sustainable Catering.

- **Economic** - Focusing on generating economic benefits for all stakeholders involved in an event including organizers, vendors, attendees and the local community such as local procurement, fairtrade practices, tourism development, and partnership and collaboration to share expertise and maximize the event's economic impact on the local economy.

Best Use of Technology

Best Use of Technology showcases a DMC's innovative use of the latest technology to enhance a program or event to maximize the guest experience, including, but not limited to, special event technical production (lighting, audio, multimedia production, staging, and special effects), creation of a client app, and use of a hybrid or an online streaming platform.

Best Overall Program

Best Overall Program recognizes the ability to bring the WOW factor into multiple disciplines of a DMC that encompasses a series of coordinated events designed to achieve an overarching goal. Entries must include services from at least three (3) core DMC services: transportation, tours/activities, event management, program logistics, and entertainment.

People's Choice Award

Additional option upon submission of an Achievement Award. Entry storyboards will be featured on the public online voting site.

People's Choice

DMCs may elect to submit any Achievement Award entry to the People's Choice Award (public online voting site). The winning award is based solely on the total number of votes each finalist's storyboard receives and is separate from the Achievement Award winners. Public voters can submit one vote every 24 hours, and there is no limit to the number of votes per voter.

Recognition Awards

Honors peers and industry leaders with special acknowledgment for their efforts and leadership.

ADMEI Volunteer of the Year

ADMEI Volunteer of the Year recognizes an individual whose valuable service and selfless commitment to ADMEI have made a significant difference in the advancement of ADMEI. The award highlights the individual's actions to further ADMEI's mission through their talent and service.

Carol Norfleet Destination Management Rising Star

Destination Management Rising Star recognizes an individual who has been in the Destination Management industry for a minimum of one (1) year and a maximum of five (5) years.

Destination Management Professional of the Year

Destination Management Professional of the Year recognizes an individual who has given their time, dedication, leadership, and knowledge towards advancing the Destination Management industry.

2026 AWARDS PROGRAM ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS & OVERVIEW

Hall of Fame | Lifetime Achievement Award

ADMEI Hall of Fame | Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes an individual who has given their time, dedication, leadership, and knowledge towards advancing the Destination Management industry over their lifetime. Additional criteria:

- Must be an active member of ADMEI for ten (10) or more consecutive years
- Must be close to the end of their DMC career, with approximately 20 years within the industry
- Must have earned their Destination Management Certified Professional Designation (DMCP)
- Must have a distinguished record of achievement at the highest levels within their company, community, and the DMC industry, with consideration given to integrity, character, and service

Joanne O'Connor President's Award

Selected by ADMEI's President, the Joanne O'Connor President's Award is presented to the individual who has been deemed to be the most helpful to the ADMEI president in achieving ADMEI goals and objectives during their term.

Supplier of the Year

Selected by ADMEI's Board of Directors, the Supplier of the Year Award recognizes an ADMEI Associate Member for its efforts and partnership with ADMEI and the DMC Industry.

ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

Submit entries via the ADMEI Awards Site. Please visit www.admei.org/awards for up-to-date information and a link to the online submission site.

Achievement Awards

All Achievement Award submissions require the following:

- Overview & Overall Impact (Not to Exceed 1000 Words): Describe the overall event/activity/program including the uniqueness, complexity, and creativity. Below is the judge's rubric and how each response is weighted:
 - Client's goals and objectives and how they were met. (40 points)
 - Challenges and parameters during the preplanning phase. (20 points)
 - Degree of difficulty executing the plan. (20 points)
 - Unique and distinctive program elements. (20 points)
 - Strategic and creative efforts that could include sustainability initiatives, DEIA and/or cultural integration, and risk management and mitigation. (10 points)
 - Support materials. (30 points)
 - Overall impression of the event/activity/program and services provided. (40 points)
- Support Materials
 - Photos (jpg or png): Photo collages are not permitted.
 - Required: 2 individual photos identified as your primary photos for publicity purposes.
 - Up to 8 additional individual photos may be included.
 - Up to 5 supporting PDF documents: PDF documents may include supporting materials such as samples, inspiration boards, diagrams, graphics, maps, collateral, and other documents that support the activity/event/program plan. (Photo collages of the executed program are not permitted.)
 - Up to 1 multimedia collateral: The video may be submitted as a .mp4, .mov. DMC branding is permitted. Videos are limited to three (3) minutes.
- DMC Logo
- 100-word description: This description is a summary of your submission. It will also be used for publicity purposes such as publication about the entry, the award event program, the reading of the finalists, and ADMEI media/press releases.

People's Choice Award

People's Choice Award submissions require the following:

- People's Choice entry must have been submitted as an Achievement Award under the same entry title.
- A Storyboard/e-Poster 16:9 ratio (or 1920 x 1080 pixels). The storyboard should contain the 100-word description from the Achievement Award submission, the DMC company logo, and photos. All submissions will compete against one another for the most public votes. Voters can vote once a day while the site is active.
- People's Choice voting will take place in January 2024.

Recognition Awards

All Recognition Award submissions require the following:

- Photograph of nominee.
- Logo: If the submission becomes a finalist, the DMC's or Supplier Associate Member's logo may be used during the annual conference.
- 100-word Description: This description will be used for publicity purposes, such as publication about the nominee, the reading of the finalists, and ADMEI media/press releases.
- Overview & Overall Impact (Not to Exceed 1000 Words): Provide details on the nominee that highlight the individual's efforts and contributions to the DMC, ADMEI, and/or the Destination Management industry.

Lifetime Achievement | Hall of Fame submissions also require:

- Two (2) letters of recommendation/support from employer, vendor, client, or peer.