



NRECA
Spotlight
on **Excellence**
Awards



Introducing the Revamped **Spotlight on Excellence** Program

Why is Spotlight Changing?

- ★ To keep the program **relevant**
- ★ To make the program more **sustainable**
- ★ To ensure **prestigious recognition** of excellence

Key Updates to **Spotlight**

- Streamlined categories
- Peer-to-Peer feedback option
- Simplified entry process
- More consistent judging
- Expanded recognition of winners

New, Streamlined
CATEGORIES

Excellence in:

CONTENT & STORYTELLING

Recognizes **all** written work, including:

- News stories
- Feature articles
- Columns and blogs
- Magazines and newsletters
- Annual reports and special publications



Excellence in:

DIGITAL & SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Recognizes **digital strategy work**,
including:

- Websites
- Social media campaigns
- Digital engagement initiatives
- Email Marketing campaigns



Excellence in:

VISUAL & MULTIMEDIA

Recognizes **all** visual and multimedia work,
including:

- Short- and long-form video
- Photography
- Graphic design
- Branding
- Advertising campaigns



Excellence in:

YOUR CHOICE! (WILDCARD)

Flexibility to recognize a range of exceptional work:

- **Internal or external events**
- **Member or employee engagement initiatives**
- **Crisis communications efforts**



Excellence in:

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

**Recognizes comprehensive,
goal-driven communications campaigns.**

- **Entries should demonstrate excellence in planning, execution and measurable impact.**
- **Top entry will receive the Edgar F. Chesnutt Award.**



Simplified Entry Process

Making the entry process **easier**,
focusing on **what matters** most.



What makes the work
strong or innovative?



How was the work
developed & executed?



What results or impact
did it achieve?

More Consistent Judging

- Entries evaluated with the **scoring rubric**.
- Judging panels of **experienced professionals**
- Judges will provide more informed, credible **feedback**



More Recognition for Winners

Highlighting **stronger work** -
without lowering standards.

- Entries that score 95+ will be awarded and highlighted in the Library of Leading Practices.
- Winners can display entries at Connect.
- Winners will be highlighted in additional ways throughout the year.



New **Reduced** Entry Fees

**2027 Fees:
\$100 per entry
\$80 early bird**

**2027 Trophy Cost
(Optional):
Approx. \$50**

**Early Bird:
September 14-25**

New **Entry Window** Timeline



2026-2027 Spotlight Timeline

Judging

**November 16 –
February 1**

**Winners
Announced
Week of
March 29**

**Chesnutt Winner
Announced
May 4-6, 2027
Connect
Conference**

New Option:

PEER-TO-PEER FEEDBACK

Communicators can submit their work for feedback from communications leaders.

- Designed to support learning and refinement of our members' work, and preparation for any future Spotlight on Excellence Award submissions.
- Feedback is qualitative, professional, and focused on strategy and improvement.



PEER-TO-PEER FEEDBACK

- Year-round option that's separate from the Spotlight on Excellence Awards program
- Can submit an entry from peer-to-peer feedback program as a Spotlight entry, as long as it meets the qualifications of when the work was completed and the deadline for the Spotlight cycle.

What Entrants Submit

Each submission must include:

- **What Makes the Work Strong or Innovative? (100 – 250 words)**
- **How Was the Work Developed and Executed? (100-200 words)**
- **What Results or Impact Did It Achieve? (200-250 words)**
- **Samples or Links to the work**
- **Feedback Focus (e.g., strategy, clarity, creativity, etc.)**

What **PEER-TO-PEER** **Entrants** Can Expect

- Examples of work reviewed by members of the Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC).
- Feedback will be provided within 60 days of submission via the AwardForce platform.
- \$20 per entry



QA

Questions? Email: spotlightonexcellence@nreca.coop

cooperative.com/Spotlight

