

Q: Why is the Spotlight program changing?

A: The program is being redesigned to better reflect the strategic, integrated communications work happening across electric cooperatives today. Over the past couple of years, NRECA has incorporated member feedback on how to make Spotlight a more durable, manageable program for the long term. As the program has grown, it has naturally become more complex to administer. These updates ensure Spotlight remains relevant, sustainable and a prestigious recognition of excellence.

Q: What are the biggest changes to the program?

A: The 2027 program introduces several key updates:

- Streamlined categories to reduce complexity and raise the bar for excellence
- Simplified entry process focused on impact and outcomes
- More consistent judging through a standardized rubric and expert reviewers
- Expanded recognition to highlight more high-quality work and share best practices
- Peer-to Peer feedback option: Communicators will have the option to submit work for peer feedback from communications leaders outside of the awards competition window.

Q: What are the new award categories?

A: Entries will be consolidated into five core areas:

- **Content & Storytelling** (written and editorial work across platforms)
- **Digital & Social Communications** (web, social and digital engagement)
- **Visual & Multimedia** (video, photography, design, advertising)
- **Wildcard** (unique efforts like events, internal comms or crisis response)
- **Strategic Communications Campaign** (integrated, goal-driven work across all channels)

These categories are designed to better align with how communications work is planned and executed today.

Q: How is the entry process changing?

A: The submission process is being simplified to make it easier to enter while focusing on what matters most.

Entrants will respond to a short set of questions covering:

- What makes the work strong or innovative
- How it was developed and executed
- What results or impact it achieved

This shift puts greater emphasis on strategy, creativity, and impact.

Q: How will judging work?

A: All entries will be evaluated using a standardized scoring rubric to ensure consistency across categories. Judging panels will include experienced professionals with relevant expertise, providing more informed, credible evaluations.

Q: How is recognition expanding?

A: To better highlight strong work:

- All entries scoring 95 or higher (out of 100) will receive a Spotlight on Excellence Award.
- Winning entries will be featured in the Library of Leading Practices.
- Winners will receive expanded visibility, including recognition at Connect and additional promotional opportunities.

This approach increases recognition while maintaining a high standard.

Q: What is the new Peer-to-Peer feedback option?

A: In addition to the awards program, communicators will have the option to submit work for constructive feedback outside the competition window. This option is designed to support professional development, idea sharing and continuous improvement. More information will follow on the specifics of the Peer-to-Peer feedback option.

2027 SPOTLIGHT FAQs



Q: What is staying the same?

- A:**
- Entries will still be grouped by co-op size and type to ensure fair competition.
 - The program will continue to recognize excellence across the full range of cooperative communications work.
 - Spotlight will remain a peer-driven program built for co-op communicators.

Q: When will I learn more?

- A:** The redesigned program will be announced at the 2026 Connect Conference, with additional details shared over the summer ahead of the fall entry period.

Q: What do these changes mean for me?

- A:**
- Simpler to enter. Less time spent on submissions, more focus on your work and results.
 - More value overall. Expanded recognition and new peer feedback opportunities help you learn, improve and get recognized.

2026-2027 Call for Entries Details

Call for Entries Period: September 14 - October 26, 2026

Early Bird Call for Entries Period: September 14 - 25, 2026

Entry Fee: \$100 for all categories (submitted after September 25, 2026)

Early Bird Fee: \$80 for all categories (submitted September 14 - 25, 2026)

Award Recognition: Connect Conference, May 4-6, 2027, Columbus, Ohio

