



FMCA
OUTSTANDING
AWARDS
PROGRAM TOOLKIT

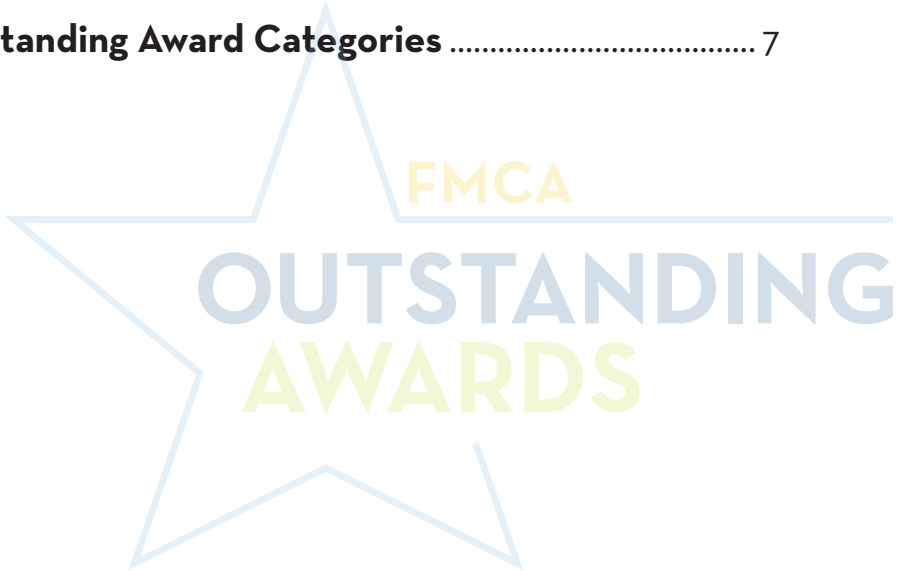
ENTRY DEADLINE:
FEBRUARY 9, 2026

FMCA MEMBERS: \$50 Per Entry
NONMEMBERS: \$85 Per Entry



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SECTION 1: BEFORE YOU APPLY

Overview:

Participating in the Florida Municipal Communicators Association (FMCA) Outstanding Awards Program is a great opportunity to highlight your work and elevate the role of communication in your local government. Below, you'll find everything you need to understand the process, maximize your chances of success and learn more about the benefits of entering this prestigious competition.

Benefits of Participating:

- ▶ **Professional Recognition:** Gain acknowledgment from your peers and industry leaders.
- ▶ **Career Advancement:** Winning or being a finalist can boost your professional profile and lead to more opportunities.
- ▶ **Showcase Your Government's Success:** Highlight the communication strategies that have made a difference in your community.

What Makes a Winning Entry?

- ▶ **Clarity:** Your project or campaign should have clear objectives, strategies and outcomes.
- ▶ **Innovation:** Highlight creative and forward-thinking approaches to engaging your audience.
- ▶ **Impact:** Demonstrate measurable results and how the project benefited your municipality or citizens.

Deadlines and Submission Process:

- ▶ **Submission Opens:** December 17, 2025
- ▶ **Submission Closes:** February 9, 2026
- ▶ **Finalists Notified:** March 27, 2026
- ▶ **Winners Announced:** April 30, 2026

Help Us Spread the Word!

Sample LinkedIn Content for Promoting Participation to Fellow Communicators in Your Network:

"Calling all municipal communicators! The FMCA Outstanding Awards Program is an incredible opportunity to showcase your hard work and creativity. Whether you've led an innovative campaign or implemented new tools to engage your residents, this is YOUR chance to get recognized. Enter today and join a network of professionals pushing the boundaries of local government communication!" #FMCA #CityComms #OutstandingAwards

Submission Steps:

Step 1. Learn about the categories.

The FMCA now proudly offers 20 categories for local governments to showcase their marketing and communications efforts. This provides an opportunity for municipalities large and small to submit an entry in at least one category. You can read more about each category on pages 6-13.

Step 2. Pay the required fees.

Sign in to the Awards portal [here](#). You'll need your login. (If you are not a member, contact FMCA staff [here](#) for assistance in creating a login.) Click on the "submit your entry" button and select the categories for which you are submitting an entry. Each entry is \$50 for members or \$85 for nonmembers. You will receive an email receipt once your payment is processed. *(If you cannot pay by credit card, please contact staff for assistance.)*

Step 3. Upload the entry form and collateral materials.

Once your payment is processed, you will receive an email confirmation with a personalized link to upload your entry. If you **submit** an entry for more than one category, you will receive a personalized link for each. Follow the **step-by-step** instructions on the form, enter your narrative answers in the spaces provided and then upload your materials. Once you hit submit, you will receive a third and final email confirming that your entry has been submitted.

Step 4. Await the results.

We are excited to share this opportunity for municipal communicators to showcase their incredible work. Finalists will be notified by March 31, 2026, to allow ample time to make arrangements to attend our awards ceremony during our Annual Conference April 29-30, 2026, at the Clearwater Beach Sheraton Sand Key Resort.

**FEE for
EACH Entry:**

**\$50 for
members**

**\$85 for
nonmembers**

FMCA

**OUTSTANDING
AWARDS**

SECTION 2: FINALISTS

What to Expect as a Finalist:

- ▶ **Promotion:** A press release template and social media graphics will be provided to help you share the news.
- ▶ **Interviews:** You may be contacted for an interview to highlight your achievements.

Sample Social Media Post for Finalists:

“Excited to announce that [Your Local Government] has been named a finalist in the FMCA Outstanding Awards Program! Honored to be recognized for our efforts in [brief project description].” #FMCA #OutstandingAwards

Press Release Template for Finalists:

Headline: [Local Government] Named Finalist in Florida Municipal Communicator Association Outstanding Awards Program

[Local Government Name] is proud to announce that our [project name] has been named a finalist in the prestigious FMCA Outstanding Awards Program. This recognition highlights our innovative approach to [project purpose] and its positive impact on our community.

[pertinent project details]

We look forward to the final announcement and celebrating all the outstanding work from municipalities across the state.



SECTION 3: WINNERS

Celebration and Recognition:

Recognition: Your winning entry will be posted on the association's website, social media and the Florida League of Cities Quality Cities online magazine, qualitycities.com.

- ▶ **Congratulatory Letter from the Association to City Leaders (Elected Officials/Managers)**
- ▶ **Award Presentation:** Winners can request the association staff to either:
 - ▶ Present the award in person at your council meeting or internal event
 - ▶ Provide a personalized video congratulating your team, which you can use on your channels
- ▶ **Press and Social Media Support:** Winners will receive:
 - ▶ Custom press release templates
 - ▶ Graphics and messaging for social media

Testimonial from a Previous Winner: *"Earning an Outstanding Award was meaningful to our team because it validated the high-quality service we strive to provide to our community. Knowing these awards are judged by our peers around the state - people who truly understand the unique role and challenges of municipal communications in Florida - made it all the more meaningful."*

- Lizzy Kelley, APR, Marketing and Public Information Manager, City of Tallahassee

Sample Social Media Post for Winners: "Thrilled to announce that [Entity Name Here] has won an FMCA Outstanding Award for [Award Category]! Proud of our team's hard work in [brief project description]." #FMCA #CityComms #OutstandingAwards



SECTION 4: FINALIST/WINNER ANNOUNCEMENT MATERIALS

Press Release Template for Winners:

Headline: [Entity] Wins Florida Municipal Communicator Outstanding Award

“**[Entity]** is honored to announce that our [project name] has been recognized as the winner of the FMCA Outstanding Award for [Award Category]. This award reflects our team’s dedication to improving community engagement and innovative communication efforts. We are proud to be among the top municipalities recognized for excellence in communication.”

Congratulatory Letter from the Association to Local Government Leaders (Elected Officials/Managers):

Dear [Leader’s Name],

I am pleased to inform you that your communications team has been recognized as a finalist/winner in the FMCA Outstanding Awards Program for their outstanding work on [project name]. This achievement reflects your organization’s commitment to transparent, effective communication with its residents and stakeholders.

We want to extend our congratulations to you and your staff. Our association would be honored to present the award in person at your next council meeting or provide a personalized video recognizing the achievement.

Thank you for your continued leadership in fostering a positive communications environment.

Sincerely,
Jenna Tala
Executive Director
Florida Municipal Communicators Association



SECTION 5: FMCA OUTSTANDING AWARD CATEGORIES

CAMPAIGNS

1. COLLABORATIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

- Submit a suite of materials developed for a product, service, disaster preparedness, event or branding initiative produced with the help of an external entity, i.e., a PR firm, video production agency, freelance talent, etc. (three to five pieces with a common theme).
- Videos must not exceed five minutes. The content of print and digital materials should be centered on the campaign content. (For example, if a campaign ad appears in a magazine, only include the ad content with your submission.)
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity, consistency and community impact.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Print, video, digital or social media.

2. MARKETING CAMPAIGN PRODUCED IN-HOUSE

- Submit a suite of materials developed for a product, service, disaster preparedness, event or branding initiative produced entirely using internal resources (three to five pieces with a common theme).
- Videos must not exceed five minutes. The content of print and digital materials should be centered on the campaign content. (For example, if a campaign ad appears in a magazine, only include the ad content with your submission.)
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity, consistency and community impact.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Print, video, digital or social media.

CAMPAIGNS CONTINUED

3. SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

- Submit posts developed for a product, service, disaster preparedness, event or branding initiative (three to five pieces with a common theme).
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity, consistency and community impact.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Campaign analytics, screenshots of engagement.

4. MARKETING CAMPAIGN TARGETING DIVERSE OR MULTICULTURAL AUDIENCES

- Submit a suite of materials developed for diverse, underserved or non-English-speaking audiences or spotlighting segments of those communities to foster greater understanding and unity.
- Submissions will be judged on the demonstration of measurable outcomes aligned with the campaign's objectives, such as increased engagement in a program, enhanced awareness of an issue impacting a minority group, improved customer satisfaction or similar results.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Print, video, digital or social media.

5. MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR SPECIAL EVENT OR COMMEMORATION*

***This category is exclusive to municipalities only.**

- Submit a suite of materials (three to five pieces with a common theme) centered on marketing and communications for a specific event, i.e., a parade, holiday festival, ribbon cutting, etc.
- Judges will assess criteria such as creativity, effectiveness and overall outcomes, attendance, earned media, etc.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Summary of earned media, attendance, event feedback, print, video, digital or social media elements.

MOMENTS + EVENTS category on next page

MOMENTS + EVENTS

1. SOCIAL MEDIA POST

- Submit a single, graphically designed social media post with caption if applicable.
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as visual creativity, originality, aesthetics and relevance.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Post analytics, screenshots of engagement, etc.

2. VIDEO PRODUCED IN-HOUSE: EDUCATION/TRAINING/RECRUITMENT*

***This category is exclusive to municipalities only.**

- Submit a single video for an educational campaign, training exercise or local government recruitment opportunity produced entirely using department staff/resources.
- Videos must not exceed five minutes.
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity and innovation, clear messaging, production quality, inclusivity and overall presentation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Summary of the video's goals and objectives, as well as the production process, target audience and overall impact.

3. VIDEO PRODUCED IN-HOUSE: PROMOTIONAL/SPECIAL EVENT*

***This category is exclusive to municipalities only.**

- Submit a single video promoting an event or product/service launch produced entirely using department staff/resources.
- Videos must not exceed five minutes.
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity and innovation, clear messaging, production quality, inclusivity and overall presentation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Summary of the video's goals and objectives, as well as the production process, target audience and overall impact.

MOMENTS + EVENTS CONTINUED

4. COLLABORATIVE VIDEO: EDUCATION/TRAINING/RECRUITMENT

- Submit a single video for an educational campaign, training exercise or local government recruitment opportunity produced with the help of an external entity, i.e., a PR firm, video production agency, freelance talent, etc.
- Videos must not exceed five minutes.
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity and innovation, clear messaging, production quality, inclusivity and overall presentation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Summary of the video's goals and objectives, as well as the production process, target audience and overall impact

5. COLLABORATIVE VIDEO: PROMOTIONAL/SPECIAL EVENT

- Submit a single video promoting an event or product/service launch produced with the help of an external entity, i.e., a PR firm, video production agency, freelance talent, etc.
- Videos must not exceed five minutes.
- Submissions will be judged on criteria such as creativity and innovation, clear messaging, production quality, inclusivity and overall presentation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Summary of the video's goals and objectives, as well as the production process, target audience and overall impact.

MOMENTS + EVENTS CONTINUED

6. ANNUAL REPORT (PRINT OR DIGITAL)*

*This category is exclusive to municipalities only.

- Submit a single annual report produced within the last two fiscal years.
- Reports will be judged on criteria such as aesthetics, innovation, clarity/ accessibility and comprehensiveness.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Summary of the report's goals and objectives, as well as the production process, target audience and overall impact. Pictures or a video not exceeding two minutes will also be accepted.

7. CRISIS RESPONSE

*This category is exclusive to municipalities only.

- Submit a comprehensive document outlining the crisis, communication challenges, response deployed and the positive outcomes achieved.
- Submission will be judged on criteria such as clarity, consistency, thoroughness and skill when responding to an unforeseen challenge.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Press releases, social media posts and any crisis-specific collateral.

ONGOING EFFORTS category on next page

ONGOING EFFORTS

1. BRAND BOOK OR STYLE GUIDE

- Submit the single brand book or style guide in current operation by your local government.
- Judges will assess criteria such as creativity, clarity, consistency and innovation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: Examples of how the brand book has been applied across various channels and campaigns.

2. PODCAST

- Submit podcast clips or excerpts (max. of three 10-minute segments) showcasing key moments that define the essence of your podcast. You can submit links to entire shows and provide timecodes for actual submission excerpts, whether presented in audio-only format or with an accompanying video version.
- Judges will assess criteria such as content/writing, production quality and overall experience.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: A compelling summary of your podcast, highlighting its unique value proposition and impact, analytics, etc.

3. WEBSITE

- Submit a link to the homepage of your local government website.
- Judges will assess criteria such as user-friendly design, intuitive navigation and the seamless delivery of essential services and information.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: A compelling summary of citizen engagement with the site and any unique web features, such as interactive tools, community forums and real-time communication channels that facilitate a two-way dialogue between residents and government officials.

ONGOING EFFORTS CONTINUED

4. MAGAZINE (ELECTRONIC OR PRINT)

- Submit a single issue of your municipal or county magazine from the last 24 months. The publication can be any size.
- Judges will assess criteria such as aesthetic appeal, readability and the effective use of layout and typography.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: A compelling summary of your magazine, including a timeline for production, the number of staff responsible for magazine content, distribution numbers, etc. Pictures or a video not exceeding two minutes will also be accepted.

5. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- Submit a detailed copy of your local government's strategic communication and marketing plan. This document should outline the goals, objectives, target audience, key message and strategies employed, metrics and outcomes. Submitted plans can focus on a single aspect, such as social media strategy.
- Judges will assess criteria such as overall strategic planning, clear messaging, measurable impact, adaptability and innovation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: A compelling summary of your plan, including samples of the content generated from the plan, ways it's been used for cross-departmental collaboration and citizen response, if any.

6. NEWSLETTER (ELECTRONIC OR PRINT)

- Submit a single newsletter, ensuring that the submission reflects the quality and diversity of content that the newsletter consistently delivers.
- Judges will assess criteria such as clarity and accessibility, design, visual appeal and measurable impact.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: A compelling summary of your newsletter, including how often it comes out, who helps produce it, readership, engagement, etc.

ONGOING EFFORTS CONTINUED

8. BEST USE OF PROMOTIONAL ITEM

- Submit a picture and a compelling summary about the use of a promotional item to enhance brand recognition, engage an audience or support a marketing campaign.
- Submissions should demonstrate how the promotional item was strategically used to leave a lasting impression, reinforce messaging and achieve campaign objectives.
- Judges will assess the item's originality, relevance to the target audience and its impact on brand or campaign success.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION SUGGESTIONS: A compelling summary of your newsletter, including how often it comes out, who helps produce it, readership, engagement, etc. Pictures or a video not exceeding two minutes will also be accepted.