

2026

ACEC
Wisconsin

ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARDS



CALL FOR ENTRIES

2026 Engineering Excellence Awards

Recognizing Exceptional Ideas and Innovations in Engineering

ABOUT THE AWARDS

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Wisconsin's annual Engineering Excellence Awards (EEA) competition provides the opportunity to highlight and celebrate achievements in engineering. The awards program showcases the best in engineering achievements to a statewide audience of clients, industry leaders, legislators and other decision makers.

The Engineering Excellence Awards program:

- Recognizes engineering achievements demonstrating a high degree of client satisfaction through quality, cost-effective solutions.
- Increases public knowledge and enhances the image of consulting engineers.
- Highlights the value and importance of professional engineers to our state's legislators.
- Provides invaluable public relations and marketing opportunities.
- Gives you an opportunity to recognize clients and partners with awards and publicity.

PUBLICITY

Entry into this competition assists your marketing efforts and augments your firm's business development program. Past recipients have reported the recognition received highlighted the value of the project to clients and the community.

Each submission is featured in the ACEC WI Engineering Excellence Awards magazine published by The Daily Reporter and distributed statewide to its subscribers, approximately 3,000 in circulation. This full-color magazine has also been used extensively in meetings with legislators. Projects will be featured in blogs targeted at legislators. By highlighting the best projects, submissions will help elected officials understand the breadth and value engineering firms provide. Award recipients are recognized at the ACEC WI Annual Awards Banquet, through news releases sent to the media throughout the state, in ACEC WI's news articles, social media and in the Engineering Excellence Awards section of the ACEC WI website.

ELIGIBILITY & GENERAL CRITERIA

Entries into the Engineering Excellence Awards must meet the following general criteria:

- Any firm maintaining an office in Wisconsin and engaged in the private practice of consulting engineering is eligible to enter the competition, whether or not the firm is an ACEC WI member. Joint ventures are eligible to submit. To qualify for the member rate, at least 50% of the JV firms must be ACEC Wisconsin members. The non-member rate applies to JVs with less than 50% ACEC Wisconsin membership.
- ***For a project to be eligible, the firm's Wisconsin office must have had a leadership role in the project.***
- Projects entered in the competition may have been executed anywhere in the world.
- Construction of a distinct phase or a completed project (Categories B through L, with the exception of D) must have been substantially completed and ready for use between November 1, 2023, and October 31, 2025. Studies and research (Category A) or surveying and mapping projects (Category D) must have been publicly disclosed by the client between November 1, 2023, and October 31, 2025. A complete listing of the award categories is available on pages 3-7.
- A project may be entered only once by the entering firm in any category. The same project may be entered in a different category by a different entering firm. However, after a project has been entered in Category A, and the project has been constructed, the project may be entered by the same firm in a different category - B through L - in the year when eligible.
- Engineering achievements that have won awards in other state or national award programs may be entered.

ENTRY NOTES

- Competition entries must be submitted in accordance with rules in this booklet. ACEC WI reserves the right to interpret the rules and determine eligibility of entries.
- All materials will be submitted electronically through the new online submission portal.

- ACEC WI and the Judging Committee reserve the right to determine the eligibility and category classification for all entries.
- All entries are eligible for referral to the ACEC national competition. ACEC WI competition judges will recommend projects best suited for entry into the national competition.

JUDGING

Entries will be judged on the basis of work performed by the entering firm(s) and according to the rating guidelines. Entries are reviewed by a panel of highly qualified judges from outside the association membership. Each entry will be judged on its own merits based on the judging rating guidelines listed. The judges will select the award winners. Awards will be presented at the judges' discretion, in with ACEC WI guidelines and rules.

RATING GUIDELINES & DEFINITIONS

Judges use the following guidelines to score submissions. Each entry is judged on its own merit.

1. Original or innovative application of new or existing techniques..... 20%

- Does the entry demonstrate use of a new science or a breakthrough in the general knowledge of engineering?
- Does the entry represent a unique application of a new or existing technology, techniques, materials or equipment?

2. Future value to the engineering profession and perception by the public..... 20%

- Will the entry redefine current engineering thinking?
- Does the entry advance a positive public image of engineering excellence?

3. Social, economic and sustainable design considerations..... 20%

- Do the solutions identified produce secondary benefits of value to the community environment?
- Does the entrant's approach provide society with social, economic or sustainable development benefits?
- Does the entrant's contribution to the project improve the health, safety or welfare of the public or affected environment?

4. Complexity..... 20%

- Does the entrant successfully address very complex criteria or unique problems?
- Were extraordinary problems of site, location, hazardous conditions, project requirements or similar elements present?
- Does the entry require use of out of the ordinary technology or ingenuity for achievement of the project's goals?

5. Exceeding client/owner needs..... 20%

- Did the engineer or entrant successfully engage the client/owner in the overall project development process?
- Is it an economical and cost-effective solution? How did the final cost relate to the original budget estimate?
- How closely does the entrant's solution meet the total goals of the client/owner?
- Did the entrant meet the client's time schedule?
- Did the entrant play a significant role in the submitted portion of the project budget? (Based on project description and project budget information.)

Total 100%

ENTRY CATEGORIES

In order to mirror the national ACEC Engineering Excellence Awards competition, ACEC WI submissions are entered into one of 12 categories.

The entering firm must select the category that is most appropriate. A project may be entered only once in any category. Judges reserve the right to determine the category classification for all entries. It is common for a project to be eligible for more than one category. It is up to the entrant to determine which category the entry best fits. If you have questions, contact ACEC WI at 608-257-9223.

CATEGORY A: Studies, Research & Consulting Engineering Services

Non-design services, projects not involving the preparation of construction documents, such as:

- New products, materials and technologies
- Expert testimony
- Basic research and studies
- Computer/software technology
- Technical papers
- Public outreach/involvement
- Water conservation
- Security plans
- Project feasibility studies/ economic/risk
- Value engineering

AWARDS

There are three award designations that your project may win: State Finalist, Best of State or Grand Award. Each project will be evaluated on its own merit by a distinguished panel of judges.

All projects nominated for an award will be recognized in the Engineering Excellence Awards special edition magazine, highlighted in a special ACEC WI e-newsletter, included on the ACEC WI Engineering Excellence Awards webpage, featured in a unique blog post (members-only benefit) and recognized on stage at the ACEC WI Awards Banquet.

Awards plaques will be presented to the entering firm and the client/owner during the April 24, 2026 Awards Banquet.

Award Designations
State Finalist

All projects worthy of nomination are seen as achievements in engineering and will be honored with this award.

Best of State

This award will be given to the group of projects receiving the highest scores. These projects are eligible to submit to the national competition.

Grand Award

Awarded to the project that best represents the spirit and criteria of the competition by the judging panel. The Grand Award winner will be selected from the Best of State winners.

ADVANCING TO NATIONAL COMPETITION

ACEC WI competition judges will recommend projects best suited for entry into the national competition. In accordance with ACEC guidelines, submissions to the national competition must be made through ACEC WI.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Submitted materials must be uploaded by October 31, 2025; Materials received after that date will not be accepted. All materials submitted become the property of ACEC WI and may be used in ACEC WI publications. Submitted materials will not be returned.

ACEC WI Submission Deadline

October 31, 2025

Entrants Notified of Awards

No later than December 19, 2025

ACEC National Entry Deadline

January 7, 2026

ACEC National Judging

February 20-22, 2026

ACEC WI Awards Banquet

April 24, 2026, The American Club, Kohler, WI

ACEC Gala & Awards Presentation

May 5, 2026, Washington, D.C.

ENTRY CATEGORIES

**CATEGORY B: Building/
Technology Systems**

- Mechanical/electrical/plumbing
- Computer/technology
- Communications
- Acoustics
- Software systems
- Sustainability or carbon neutrality
- Efficiency certification standards, e.g., LEED®
- Energy efficiency – new and retrofit
- Secure facilities (military, research, correctional)

CATEGORY C: Structural Systems

- Foundations
- Tunnels
- Buildings
- Seismic design
- Towers
- Bridges
- Stadiums

**CATEGORY D: Survey & Mapping
Technology**

- Geometrics, ALTA, land title and rights surveys
- Control, GPS, monitoring or construction surveying
- Survey mapping, GIS/LIS, photogrammetry

SUBMITTING AN ENTRY

This section describes all required submission materials for entering the 2026 Engineering Excellence Awards competition. All materials must be submitted exactly as described in this document.

Notes on Submitting and Entry

- All files must be submitted electronically through the ACEC WI EEA submission portal: eea.acec.org/Wisconsin
- If the submission does not meet the requirements listed, it may be disqualified.
- If any part of the entry does not meet requirements listed, that portion of the entry may not be presented for judging.
- Extraneous material will be discarded prior to judging.
- QR codes are not permitted in any portion of the award submission.
- No reference to other awards should be included in submitted materials.
- An entry may be submitted through only one ACEC state member organization.
- Non-compliance with the rules may lead to disqualification.
- Entries must be received by October 31, 2025.

Tips for Preparing a Winning Entry

- Use the Entry Checklist on page 8 of this document to properly format your entry.
- Download the Easy Entry Workbook at www.acecwi.org for step-by-step instructions.
- Review previous winning entries to see firsthand what works.
- Contact ACEC WI to receive materials from past entries.
- Contact ACEC WI with questions.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All submissions will be electronic through the awards portal eea.acec.org/wisconsin.

1 Official Entry Form

The signed, official entry form with an entry category selected. Firm, project and client/owner name should be listed as each is to appear in media and awards. The official entry form must be filled out before submitting additional files.

2 Executive Summary

The executive summary is a one-page description of the entry, the challenge and engineering solution. Clearly state your case in this document; this is the first item judges will read.
Please see the entry checklist for executive summary format requirements.

3 Project Description

Tell the story of the project and the entrant's role. The project description should provide clear communication to the judges as to why this project is unique while addressing items a, b, c and d as listed below. The project description must address all of the following in clearly marked sections:

- A.** Role of the entering firm(s) in the project.
- B.** Role of other consultants participating in the project and the percentage of total work done by each of the other consultants.
- C.** Brief description of the entrant's contribution to the project, addressing each of the following in a separate, clearly defined section. The following points are judging criteria and should be clearly labeled and addressed for ease in judging (see page 3 for details):

ENTRY CATEGORIES

CATEGORY E: Environmental	CATEGORY F: Waste and Storm Water	CATEGORY G: Water Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hazardous waste• Solid waste• Restoration/reclamation/remediation• Air quality• Noise• Recycling• Waste pond management• Carbon sequestration and trading• Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wastewater collection/treatment and disposal• Residuals management and reuse• Graywater systems• CSOs• Mine tailings• Agricultural• Stormwater management• Erosion control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hydraulics, hydrology• Surface and groundwater supply development• Treatment• Transmission, distribution and storage• Watershed management• Water use reduction• Flood risk management• Climate adaptation• Coastal and eco-system restoration• Locks/dams/water control structures• Irrigation

- Uniqueness and/or innovative application of new or existing techniques.
- Future value to the engineering profession and enhanced public awareness/enthusiasm of the role of engineering.
- Social, economic and sustainable development considerations.
- Complexity.
- Successful fulfillment of client/owner needs.

Include total project budgeted cost, total project actual cost, entrant's portion of budgeted cost, entrant's portion of the actual cost, scheduled and actual date of completion information (as indicated on the official entry form).

D. Project description summary - describe in layman's terms why this project is worthy of special recognition (word count between 100 – 500 words). Explain all factors that comprise the project's uniqueness, such as innovative engineering, challenges faced and social impact. Do not reference other awards that the project has won. Note: This description will be used in project publicity.

The project description may include text, photos and graphics, but is limited to six pages.

Please see the checklist for format requirements.

4 Key Participants

Provide a spreadsheet of key participants on the project. Key participants include contractors, subcontractors, other engineers, architects and other designers involved in the project. The list should include firm name, key contact name, address and phone number.

5 Letter from Client/Owner

A typed, one-page letter from the client/owner, addressed to ACEC WI. The letter should describe the relationship with the entrant in development of the project and how it exceeded needs. The letter must be signed. Letters should be provided from both the client and owner, if applicable. WisDOT projects use a generic letter for this portion -contact ACEC WI to receive the template for the client/owner to sign.

6 Media Release

A typed, two-page media release clearly and concisely describing, in lay terms, the project and the entrant's participation in the project. Reflect on the factors listed in the project description (item 3c as outlined on page 5). In addition, include why the project is important and newsworthy. Describe the value of the project to the community, identify the number of people served, cost savings, etc. No reference to other awards should be included in the submitted material.

Please see the checklist for format requirements.

7 Images & Captions

High resolution, professional-quality photographs or illustrations should be provided. Photos should tell the story of the project to the judges.

- Accepted file formats are JPE, JPG or JPEG.
- Upload six files.
- At least 300 DPI (1920x1080 pixels) in RGB with landscape orientation (max. 1.2 MB each).
- Captions must be typed separately, not on the photo.

ENTRY CATEGORIES

CATEGORY H: Transportation

- Highways
- Rail
- Airports
- Marine/ports
- Public transit
- Intermodal facilities

CATEGORY I: Special Projects

- Safety and security
- Corrosion protection/cathodic protection
- Program and construction management
- Land development
- Trenchless technologies/directional boring
- Recreational facilities
- Subsurface engineering

CATEGORY J: Small Projects

Total project construction budget does not exceed \$5 million. At the entrant's discretion, except for entries in Category A. Projects under \$5 million are not limited to this category.

- Captions must be less than 500 characters including spaces.
- Three photographs must be of the completed project and provide a high level of visual impact.
- Three photographs should display the planning, start-up, and/or construction of the project
- For entries submitted under Category A, photographic representations of the study must be submitted.

OPTIONAL: BLOG POST (members only)

To help promote the importance of engineering firms with legislators, submissions are encouraged to write a blog post about their project. Posts will be sent to legislators and posted on social media to highlight engineering achievements in Wisconsin. This is a members-only opportunity and is another way for firms to promote their expertise. More information about the blogs, including deadlines, guidelines and tips, will be sent to submitting firms after the submission deadline.

Please see the checklist for electronic requirements.

8 Written Permission

Each entrant shall submit written permission to use any copyrighted materials, including photographs. The Easy Entry Workbook includes a sample release form.

9 Supplementary Report (Category A Only)

Include a supplementary report containing the findings portrayed with text, graphs, or photos, as needed. This report is for Category A entries only.

10 Entry Fee

The entry fee will be collected through the entry portal.

On finalizing your entry, there will be a payment portal - A credit card or check will be accepted for payment.

ACEC WI members \$675

Non-members \$2,025

ENTRY CATEGORIES

CATEGORY K: Energy

- Transmission and distribution
- Power generation
- Renewable energy
- Cogeneration
- Energy storage technologies
- Energy usage reduction programs
- Demand side management

CATEGORY L: Industrial and Manufacturing Processes and Facilities

- Petrochemical
- Biotech
- Manufacturing
- Heavy industry
- Industrial waste
- Materials handling
- Mining, metallurgy, mineralogy

2026 Entry Checklist

The Engineering Excellence Awards submission must be submitted electronically through the ACEC WI EEA submission portal: eea.acec.org/Wisconsin. After finishing the entry form, there will be an opportunity to upload additional files.

Please include items in the order listed below.

1. Official Entry Form

Project completion date falls in the range of November 1, 2023 and October 31, 2025
Form completed by a principal with the consent of the client/owner
All information is entered correctly

2. Executive Summary

Project title and entry category is at the top of the page
Document limited to one 8.5x11" page with 1" margins
12 pt minimum font size; single-spaced text

3. Project Description

Project title and entry category is at the top of the page
Section limited to six 8.5x11" pages with 1" margins
12 pt minimum font size; single spaced text
Section may include text, photos, graphics or charts

4. Key Participants

Must be in Excel file format (.xlsx or .xls) A list of key participants is included (contractors, subcontractors, other engineers, architects and designers) significantly involved in the project
Each participant includes: firm name, contact name, address, phone number, website and email address

5. Letter from Client/Owner

A signed, one-page letter addressed to ACEC WI from the client and/or owner is included

6. Media Release

Media release is limited to two 8.5x11" pages with 1" margins
12 pt minimum font size; double spaced text

7. Images & Captions

Accepted file formats are JPE, JPG or JPEG
Upload six files
Three photos of finished project
Three photos of planning and/or construction
At least 300 DPI (1920x1080 pixels) in RGB with landscape orientation (max. 1.2 MB each)
Captions must be typed separately, not on the photo
Captions must be less than 500 characters including spaces

8. Photography Release Form

Photography release form grants ACEC WI permission to use copyrighted images.

9. Supplemental Report (Category A Only)

If entering a project in Category A, a report is suggested. (Note: a report is a requirement for the National competition) If not entering in Category A, discard extraneous materials

10. Entry Fee

On finalizing your entry, there will be a payment portal - A credit card or check will be accepted for payment
ACEC WI Member \$675
Non-Member \$2,025

Optional - Blog Post

More information about the blogs, including deadlines, guidelines and tips, will be sent to submitting firms after the submission deadline