
2026 EDGE Awards

Entrant's Guide

Elevating Design, Growth & Excellence

The EDGE Awards celebrate the craftsmanship, innovation, professionalism and leadership shaping the countertop and surface fabrication industry.

This guide walks you through the entry process from start to finish—from choosing the right award category and preparing your materials to understanding how your entry will be evaluated.

Submissions Open: August 15, 2026

Submission Deadline: September 30, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.

Winners Announced: November 4, 2026 at the ISFA Annual Conference.

1. Start Here

Before beginning your entry, review the complete award categories and determine where your project, company, individual, shop or product best fits.

There are **15 ways to be recognized** across four award groups.

Project Awards

Residential Excellence

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000–\$50,000
- Over \$50,000

Commercial Excellence

- Under \$100,000
- \$100,000–\$500,000
- Over \$500,000

Material Mastery

- Quartz
- Solid Surface

- Natural Stone
- Ultra Compact

Outdoor Project Excellence

Member Awards

- Countertop & Surface Manufacturer of the Year
- Fabricator of the Year
- Associate Member of the Year

Shop Safety & Excellence

A peer-nominated award recognizing an ISFA Fabricator Member shop demonstrating outstanding safety culture and operational excellence.

This award cannot be self-nominated. Another company must submit the nomination on the shop's behalf.

Product Innovation Awards

Two national honors:

- Product Innovation – Materials
- Product Innovation – Tools

These awards are reserved for eligible **ISFA Associate Partners**.

2. Confirm Your Eligibility

Before investing time in an entry, confirm that you meet the program requirements.

Use this checklist:

- ☐ The entrant and company meet the applicable ISFA membership requirements.
- ☐ The work falls within the program's eligibility window.
- ☐ You have selected the appropriate award category.
- ☐ You can provide the required supporting information and images.
- ☐ You have the rights to submit the photographs and can grant ISFA permission to use them in awards-related communications and promotion.

- ☐ You can submit the completed entry by **11:59 p.m. on September 30, 2026.**
- ☐ Any potential conflicts of interest have been appropriately disclosed.

Category-Specific Requirements

Residential & Commercial Excellence: Be prepared to provide total project value so the entry can be placed in the appropriate tier.

Shop Safety & Excellence: Must be nominated by another company.

Product Innovation: Open to eligible ISFA Associate Partners.

Multiple Categories: A project may be entered in more than one appropriate category, but a **separate entry form is required for each category.**

3. Review the Scoring Rubric Before You Write

Don't wait until your entry is finished to look at the judging criteria.

The scoring rubric should guide what you include in your submission.

Five independent industry judges evaluate eligible entries. Judges score each criterion from **1–10**, and each score is applied to the criterion's assigned weight to produce a final weighted score out of 100.

Judge Scoring Scale

Score Guidance

- 1–2 Does Not Meet Expectations** – Little or no evidence that the entry satisfies the criterion.
- 3–4 Below Expectations** – Some relevant qualities are demonstrated, but execution or evidence is limited.
- 5–6 Meets Expectations** – Competent execution with adequate supporting evidence.
- 7–8 Exceeds Expectations** – Strong execution with clear evidence of quality, skill or impact.
- 9 Exceptional** – An exceptionally strong example demonstrating a high level of excellence.

Score Guidance

- 10 Outstanding** – Sets a benchmark for excellence and represents the highest level of achievement in the criterion.
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4. Scoring Rubric – Project Awards

Applies to: Residential Excellence, Commercial Excellence, Material Mastery and Outdoor Project Excellence.

Criterion	Weight	What Judges Evaluate
Design & Concept	20%	The overall design vision, creativity and aesthetic impact, including how effectively the surfacing contributes to the finished space.
Craftsmanship & Finish	30%	Fabrication and installation quality, including seams, edge profiles, transitions, fit, polish, alignment and overall finished execution.
Technical Difficulty	20%	The complexity of fabrication and installation, challenges encountered and skill and problem-solving required to complete the work.
Material Use	20%	How effectively the selected material's properties, characteristics and design potential were understood and used to enhance the project.
Project Documentation	10%	Whether photographs and supporting information provide judges with clear visual evidence to assess craftsmanship, material use, technical execution and the finished result.
TOTAL	100%	

Primary Tie-Breaker: Craftsmanship & Finish

5. Scoring Rubric – Member Awards

Applies to: Countertop & Surface Manufacturer of the Year, Fabricator of the Year and Associate Member of the Year.

Criterion	Weight	What Judges Evaluate
Quality of Work / Service	30%	Demonstrated excellence and consistency in fabrication, products, services or support, as appropriate to the award.
Professionalism	20%	Reliability, integrity, business practices, communication, customer or partner experience and professional standards.
Industry Contribution	25%	Contributions through education, mentorship, leadership, partnership, engagement or other meaningful industry involvement.
Impact	25%	The measurable or demonstrated difference made for customers, employees, partners, peers or the broader industry. References, testimonials and examples may support the entry.
TOTAL	100%	

Primary Tie-Breaker: Impact

6. Scoring Rubric – Shop Safety & Excellence

This award must be submitted by another company on the shop's behalf. The sponsoring company should document the nominee's safety program, training practices, shop conditions and safety record.

Criterion	Weight	What Judges Evaluate
Safety Program & Training	30%	Strength and consistency of documented safety programs, employee training, PPE practices, silica and dust-control measures and ongoing safety education.
Shop Conditions	25%	Cleanliness, organization, equipment condition and maintenance, material handling, workflow and the overall shop environment.

Criterion	Weight	What Judges Evaluate
Safety Record & Culture	25%	Demonstrated safety performance and evidence that safety is embedded in company culture, including participation, accountability, incident prevention and continuous improvement.
Operational Excellence	20%	How effectively the shop combines safe practices with workflow, quality control, equipment management, employee development and professional operating standards.
TOTAL	100%	
Primary Tie-Breaker: Safety Record & Culture		

7. Scoring Rubric – Product Innovation

Applies to: Product Innovation – Materials and Product Innovation – Tools.

Criterion	Weight	What Judges Evaluate
Originality	30%	How new, distinctive or meaningfully improved the product, material, tool, machine or technology is compared with existing industry solutions.
Impact on the Trade	30%	Its demonstrated or potential ability to improve fabrication quality, productivity, efficiency, safety, sustainability, design possibilities or other meaningful outcomes for fabricators.
Practical Value	25%	Real-world usefulness, relevance to fabricators, ease of adoption and ability to solve a clearly identified industry need or problem.
Presentation	15%	How clearly the entry explains what is new, the benefit it provides and the evidence supporting those claims, including images, examples or data where appropriate.
TOTAL	100%	
Primary Tie-Breaker: Impact on the Trade		

8. Prepare Your Written Entry

Your submission should make it easy for someone who has never seen your work to understand **what you accomplished, why it was difficult and why it deserves recognition.**

For project entries, begin by answering five questions.

What was the design goal?

What was the client or space trying to achieve?

Explain the original vision, functional requirements and desired outcome.

What makes this stand out?

Identify the **single thing you most want a judge to notice.**

Don't make judges search your submission for the reason it deserves recognition.

What was technically hard?

Describe the actual challenges involved.

These might include:

- Seams
- Spans
- Radii
- Large-format handling
- Thermoforming
- Complex layouts
- Vein matching
- Difficult installation conditions
- Material transitions
- Other fabrication challenges

Most importantly, explain **how you solved them.**

Why this material?

Explain why the material was selected and how its properties were used to the project's advantage.

What was the outcome?

Describe the finished fit and finish, client result, functional improvement or measurable impact.

9. Write for a Judge, Not for Marketing

A strong award entry isn't necessarily the entry with the fanciest language.

Specific evidence is more valuable than adjectives.

Instead of:

"Our team demonstrated exceptional craftsmanship on this beautiful project."

Explain **what the team actually did** that demonstrates exceptional craftsmanship.

Identify the seam strategy. Explain the difficult radius. Describe how the veins were aligned. Tell the judge why installation was challenging and how the team overcame it.

Whenever possible:

Claim → Evidence → Result

For example:

Claim: The installation presented an unusual technical challenge.

Evidence: Explain exactly what made it difficult and the fabrication or installation solution used.

Result: Explain what that solution allowed the team to achieve.

10. Prepare Your Photos

Professional photography is **not required**.

The goal is to give judges clear and accurate visual evidence of the work.

For project entries, the existing submission guidance calls for **3–8 high-resolution images**, including at least one wide hero shot and one close-up detail image.

Include Images That Show

- The overall project
- Important craftsmanship details
- Seams, edges and transitions
- Technically difficult elements
- Material characteristics
- The completed result

Photo Best Practices

- ☐ Use clear, sharp images.
- ☐ Use good, even lighting.
- ☐ Include both overall and detail views.
- ☐ Keep the work as the focus of the photograph.
- ☐ Make sure materials and colors appear reasonably true to life.
- ☐ Avoid submitting several nearly identical images.
- ☐ Don't digitally alter photographs in a way that misrepresents the actual work.

Basic cropping, straightening and reasonable brightness or exposure corrections are appropriate.

11. Additional Guidance by Award Type

Member Awards

Focus on **contribution, professionalism and measurable impact**.

Where possible, strengthen the nomination with:

- Specific examples
- Results
- References
- Testimonials

- Evidence of industry involvement or leadership

Shop Safety & Excellence

The sponsoring company should provide evidence of the nominee's:

- Safety program
- Training practices
- PPE practices
- Silica and dust-control measures
- Shop conditions
- Equipment and maintenance practices
- Material handling
- Safety record
- Safety culture

Photos should represent **normal operating conditions**, rather than conditions staged solely for the award entry.

Product Innovation

Clearly answer three questions:

What's new?

Identify what is genuinely new or meaningfully improved.

Why does it matter?

Explain the concrete benefit it provides to fabricators.

Can you prove it?

Include supporting images, examples, test results or data where appropriate.

12. Complete a Final Rubric Review

Before submitting, go back to the applicable scoring rubric.

For **each criterion**, ask:

Have I actually given the judges evidence they can score?

If a criterion is worth 20%, 25% or 30% of your score but is barely addressed in the entry, strengthen that portion before submitting.

Remember: judges can only evaluate the information provided.

13. Complete Your Pre-Submit Check

Before clicking Submit:

- ☐ Confirm your eligibility.
 - ☐ Verify that you've selected the correct category.
 - ☐ Complete every required field.
 - ☐ Check names, company information and contact details.
 - ☐ Review your written entry for clarity.
 - ☐ Remove unnecessary marketing language.
 - ☐ Include specific evidence and examples.
 - ☐ Review your entry against the appropriate scoring rubric.
 - ☐ Upload clear supporting photographs.
 - ☐ Confirm that your photographs support the claims made in your narrative.
 - ☐ Include references, testimonials, documentation or data where appropriate to the award.
 - ☐ Confirm you have the necessary rights to submitted photographs.
 - ☐ Complete any required conflict-of-interest disclosures.
 - ☐ Proofread the complete entry one final time.
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14. Submit Your Entry

Entries must be received no later than:

September 30, 2026

11:59 p.m.

Don't wait until the final minutes to submit. Give yourself enough time to review your entry and confirm that all required information and supporting materials have been successfully included.

A separate entry form is required for each category entered.

15. What Happens After You Submit?

After submissions close, eligible entries move into the judging process.

October 2026 – Judging Period

Five independent industry judges review and score eligible entries using the published award rubrics.

Judges are selected and invited by ISFA based on their industry expertise, experience and ability to provide fair, unbiased evaluation.

ISFA's Committee Chair and CEO serve in a **process-oversight role only** and do not score entries. Conflicts of interest are disclosed and managed.

Late October – Winners Finalized

Scores are reviewed and category winners are confirmed ahead of the Annual Conference.

November 4, 2026 – Winners Announced

The inaugural EDGE Award winners are announced and recognized at the **ISFA Annual Conference**.

16. Tie-Breakers

If two entries finish with the same final weighted score, the higher score in the designated criterion determines the winner:

Award Group	Primary Tie-Breaker
Project Awards	Craftsmanship & Finish

Award Group	Primary Tie-Breaker
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Member Awards	Impact
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Shop Safety & Excellence	Safety Record & Culture
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Product Innovation	Impact on the Trade
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If entries remain tied after the primary tie-breaker is applied, the judging panel conducts a final comparative review of the tied entries.

Ready to Enter?

Before you submit, ask yourself one final question:

Have I given an independent judge enough clear evidence to understand not only what we accomplished, but why it deserves an EDGE Award?

If the answer is yes, you're ready.

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