

SPE Awards Best Practices

Purpose:

Recognition of excellence is an important aspect of any professional society. SPE Awards Programs allow members to recognize the exceptional achievements of their colleagues at the section, region, and international level. A good nomination is key to communicating the qualifications of a candidate to the award committee. Preparing a good nomination requires time and effort, as does selecting winners from among many outstanding candidates. The challenge faced by SPE is to ensure that members, both nominators and those serving on the selection committees, make effective use of their time and talents. As a global organization, SPE recognizes the diverse cultures represented in the membership, and strives to present equal opportunity for all members to participate successfully in the SPE International Awards Program. SPE will provide instruction and resources presented in several accessible media to encourage high quality nominations from all members.

The intention of this document is to assist members in effectively communicating the qualities of their candidate to the award committees. SPE has gathered information from award committees, chairpersons, nominators, directors, and staff to assemble a list of best practices to assist members, sections, and regions in preparing high-quality international award nominations. BusinessDictionary.com defines best practices as “methods and techniques that have consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and which are used as benchmarks to strive for. There is, however, no practice that is best for everyone or in every situation, and no best practice remains best for very long as people keep on finding better ways of doing things.” (WebFinance Inc.) This best practices document will evolve along with the successful strategies provided by nominators and award committee members, the technologies available and innovations developed by SPE staff and members at the local, regional, and international level.

Best Practices Contributors:

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- SPE International Award Committees (Survey)
- SPE International Award Committee Chairs (teleconference)

1) Message from the SPE International Award Committee Chairs

The SPE International Award Committee Chairs discussed the selection process for international award winners. Several committees dealt with a large volume of nominations of various qualities. The chairs unanimously agree that the quality of nomination packets presented for regional winners moving into international consideration need improvement. Award chairs discussed measures for improvement and the following actions were approved for 2011 award cycle:

- A new five-page application form will be utilized for 2011
- Existing nominations with remaining eligibility years must be converted to the new form
- No more than three support/reference letters will be accepted
- CV and resume information will be summarized in the application form
- For regional award winners with equivalent international awards, Regional Directors must vet and select only one candidate to move into international consideration

The group acknowledged that the conversion of existing nominations to the new forms will result in a smaller nomination pool for next year, but the rewards of improved quality and filtering of poor nominations far outweighed the temporary drop in numbers. The onus for a good nomination is with the nominator, and not with the award committee members who depend on the information provided to them.

The ranking criteria give no special consideration to geographic diversity. Any skewness is considered an effect of the nomination volumes and quality from the different regions. The content of the nomination should be driven by evidence of the achievements of the candidate. The nomination requires more than "He or she is a fine engineer, always one step ahead of the game." Concrete evidence will enable the nomination committee to assess the candidate on his or her merits, and reward accordingly. Hence, extra attention is required to provide best practices guidelines to all members on how to prepare a high quality nomination.

2) Section Best Practices

The section plays a vital role in both regional and international awards nominations. Each section must communicate the importance of the SPE awards program to the members through its meetings, technical events, and newsletter. Ideally, the section motivates members to submit candidates and assists its members in producing effective nominations.

- Nominations usually come from members and any member may nominate a colleague. Section participation in the process is not a requirement, but sections can assist members in preparing nominations. Self-nominations are not accepted.
- Sections should advocate for participation in the awards program and may appoint someone from their board to help develop strong nominations from the section for all international and regional awards unless there is no appropriate candidate.
- It is suggested that the Past Chair act as the Awards Chair. They have a lot of experience with and knowledge of the section membership. The entire board may nominate candidates and the Awards Chair develops the nominations.

- Sections should remind members that their colleagues might be the SPE leaders who excel technically or professionally, even though they work with them every day and probably do not think a lot about their achievements. If they do not nominate their colleagues, no one will.
- It helps to keep one point of contact. For example, have all the nominations collected and submitted by the section chair or past chair.
- International Awards should be submitted to
 - awards@spe.org
 - International Awards
Society of Petroleum Engineers, Inc.
P. O. Box 833836
Richardson, TX 75083-3836 U.S.A.
 - Facsimile: (1) 972-952-9435 attention: International Awards
- Regional Awards should be submitted to
 - sections@spe.org
 - The appropriate Regional Director
 - Regional Awards
Society of Petroleum Engineers, Inc.
P. O. Box 833836
Richardson, TX 75083-3836 U.S.A.
 - Facsimile: (1) 972-952-9435 attention: Regional Awards
- Publish articles in the company newspaper, section newsletter, and section's website to encourage others to submit applications in the future.
- Share the winners' names at a sections dinner meeting to reflect the importance of those awards and to recognize the winners.
- Update the section's database every year with the winners name and keep the record to motivate others to participate in the future.
- Keep a record of previous year's nominations that were not selected and update them every year to maintain a candidate pool.

3) Regional Best Practices

Regional and technical directors are in a prime position to encourage the nomination of well-qualified international award candidates. They should endeavor to select and submit regional winners with robust and complete nomination packets for the international awards.

- Regional directors and technical directors need to be assertive in encouraging their sections or technical interest groups to submit quality nominations.
- Review and edit nominations for accuracy, completeness, and the effective communication of candidate qualifications.

- Before sending the regional winner to international competition, review the nomination to ensure it meets the same level of quality as a direct international nomination. If it does not, rework the nomination to meet those standards before submitting it.

4) How to write a good nomination

- Start the nomination early. Composing a good nomination takes time and effort. Begin your research when the call for nominations is posted so you are not rushed at the last minute.
- The deadline for international nominations is always 15 February. Regional deadlines generally are also 15 February but can vary; check with your Regional Director to confirm deadlines.
- Before nominating a candidate for a particular award, research the award criteria to ensure that your candidate is a good match. The award criteria are available online at www.spe.org/speawards and in the Sections Operations Manual.
- Self-nominations will not be accepted.
- Ask these questions and determine if the candidate meets each one:
 - Is there an age requirement?
 - Is there a membership requirement?
 - Is there a service requirement?
 - Is the scope of the candidate's work regional or international?
 - Do the candidate's accomplishments meet the award criteria?
- Outline your potential candidate's qualifications, comparing them side by side to the award criteria. Once the information is outlined, you will find it easier to compose your argument.
- Compose a summarizing statement outlining why your candidate should receive the award.
 - This statement must focus on award criteria and candidate qualifications as outlined in the previous step. This single sentence should summarize your candidate's qualifications and how they apply to the award criteria in a logical and concise statement.
- Compose several paragraphs providing significant information regarding the professional and industrial achievements noted in the summary statement.
 - This justification must contain sufficient detail to enable the committee to pass judgment on the candidate's worthiness.
 - List the award criteria and provide specific examples of candidate's applicable work
 - Explain how candidate's work has influenced the industry.
 - Give details regarding the originality of the candidate's work.
- Provide education and job history to provide the award committee with candidate's background
- Fill out the application form completely. Make sure every requirement is included. Make sure the presentation is attractive and is easy on the eyes. Check spelling and grammar. Ensure that the content adequately communicates the qualifications of the candidate.

- Get endorsements from 3 professional colleagues. Ask well know, highly regarded people such as past award winners, a past SPE president or past board member, well known industry experts, etc, but make sure the endorser knows the candidate's work. Start early - it can take some time and work to identify these people and get them to write endorsements.
- Ensure that each letter of endorsement is composed independently and addresses unique aspects of the candidate's work. Avoid reciprocating endorsements, e.g. you endorse me and I'll endorse you.
- Ask the candidate to suggest references.
- Let the candidate review the final nomination and give feedback. This may lead to improvement in examples and additional supporting details.
- Get another person to review the nomination for both content and the quality of the writing before submitting.
- The entire nomination submitted will consist of the nomination form completed in sufficient detail to enable the committee to pass judgment on the candidate's worthiness. Additional material received will not be included in the nomination packet. SPE staff will attach a member profile to the nomination form to complete the packet.

5) How to compose a good letter of recommendation

- Letters should include a brief introduction and discuss the relationship between writer and candidate.
- The letter writers must address specific examples of the candidate's work that meets the award criteria.
- "Because he/she is a great engineer" must be followed up by concrete evidence of why.
- Letters copied from other sources may not do justice to the nomination. Do not encourage multiple identical endorsements from colleagues.

6) Glossary – This list of definitions is provided to help global members understand the terms used in the SPE International Awards Program.

- a) **Award Committee** – Group of volunteer SPE members tasked with reviewing all nomination packets in the candidate pool to select a winner. International Award committee members serve 3-year terms, are appointed by the SPE President-elect, and are approved by SPE Board of Directors. They are familiar with the award discipline and globally diverse.
- b) **Candidate** - A person who is nominated for an award. A person who is hoping to achieve an honor or award. Same as nominee
- c) **Candidate pool** – Group of all candidates eligible for an award.

- d) **Confidential** - Not available to the general membership. Restricted because of sensitive and/or personal information. Access to SPE international award nomination materials is limited to award committees, SPE Board of Directors, and staff.
- e) **Contest** - Friendly competition between candidates for an award.
- f) **Criteria** - award standards a candidate must meet and on which judgment or decision of the award committee is based
- g) **Election** - The formal approval by the Board of Directors of the person selected for an award (i.e. the recipient or winner) by an award committee.
- h) **Endorsement** – Approving testimony. A colleague’s letter of recommendation that confirms or vouches for the candidate’s qualification for the award.
- i) **International Awards** - Awards that acknowledge significant member accomplishments of an international scope. See [International Awards](#) at SPE.org.
- j) **Member in good standing** – Paid SPE Member.
- k) **Nominate** - To propose or formally submit a person as a candidate for an award.
- l) **Nomination** – The action of proposing a person as a candidate for election for an award
- m) **Nomination Packet** – A completed nomination form, the SPE member profile, and all documentation received for a candidate for single award.
- n) **Nominator** - A person who nominates a candidate for an award.
- o) **Nominee** - A person named as the potential recipient of an award. Same as candidate
- p) **Professional Member** – SPE member who is not a student member. See [Requirements for Membership](#) on SPE.org
- q) **Qualified** – possessing the qualities or accomplishments necessary to be a candidate for an award.
- r) **Recipient** – The person selected by the award committee and approved by the Board of Directors to receive the award. The winner of the award.
- s) **Regional Awards** – Awards that acknowledge significant member accomplishments of a local or regional scope. Because winners of Regional Awards move into consideration for the International equivalent in the following year, the quality of the documentation for regional nominations should meet the same high standards. See [Regional Awards](#) at SPE.org
- t) **Sanctioned countries** – Individuals “ordinarily resident in” sanctioned countries, as defined by the US Government, are not eligible to participate in SPE Award Programs. See [SPE U.S. Sanction Membership Program](#) for details.
- u) **Selection** - The choosing of a person for an award by the award committee. The name of the selected person is presented to the Board of Directors for approval.
- v) **Student Member** – a pre-professional student chapter member currently enrolled as a university student pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree in petroleum engineering or a related field. With the exception of the Ferguson Medal, student members are not eligible for SPE awards. See [Requirements for Membership](#) on SPE.org
- w) **Winner** – The person selected by the award committee to receive the award. Same as recipient.
- x) **Young Professional** – SPE member age 35 and under. See [Young Professionals](#) on SPE.org.

(Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary) (Oxford University Press) (Society of Petroleum Engineers)

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