

2026 IMAGinE Awards Guidelines

Nominations close: 5pm, Tuesday 15 September 2026

Established in 2008, the IMAGinE Awards celebrate and recognise the projects and programs created and presented by NSW museums, galleries, and Aboriginal cultural spaces, as well as the people that make it happen and bring it all to life. Across all categories, we are on the lookout for leadership, innovation, diversity and creativity.

IMAGinE celebrates all institutions and pays special homage to those organisations run by volunteers, with limited budgets and minimal resources. These Awards offer a unique opportunity for museums and galleries in NSW to advocate, promote their achievements and raise their profile within the sector and the broader community.

Categories

The 2026 IMAGinE Award categories are Exhibition Projects, Engagement Programs, the Accessible Arts Award for Access and Inclusion, the Volunteer Achievement Award, the Volunteer Museum of the Year Award and the ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator.

1. Exhibition Projects

This category recognises excellence and innovation in exhibition practice, such as permanent or temporary exhibitions, exhibition design, exhibition publications and resources, and exhibition partnerships.

Museums/Heritage

- (A) Volunteer museum/heritage organisations (less than 1 paid staff FTE*)
- (B) Small museum/heritage organisations (1-4 paid staff FTE*)
- (C) Medium museum/heritage organisations (5 or more paid staff FTE*)

Galleries/Visual Arts

- (D) Small galleries/visual arts organisations (3 or less paid staff FTE*)
- (E) Medium galleries/visual arts organisations (4-6 paid staff FTE*)
- (F) Large galleries/visual arts organisations (7 or more paid staff FTE*)

Major Museums/Heritage & Galleries/Visual Arts

- (G) Major metropolitan institutions museum/heritage and galleries/visual arts**

*FTE refers to 'Full Time Equivalent' or 38 hours per week. Part time staff should be calculated pro rata (e.g.: a staff member who works 19 hours per week is 0.5 FTE)

** This category includes state and federal organisations as well as major institutions

2. Engagement Programs Award

The Engagement Programs award is assessed across the museum, gallery, and Aboriginal cultural sector. It celebrates best practice in ongoing programs such as public programs, education resources, websites and social media, community engagement, and participation

(H) Small organisations (4 or less paid staff FTE*)

(I) Medium organisations (5 – 10 FTE paid staff)

(J) Large and major metropolitan organisations (11 or more FTE paid staff)

*FTE refers to 'Full Time Equivalent' or 38 hours per week. Part time staff should be calculated pro rata (e.g.: a staff member who works 19 hours per week is 0.5 FTE)

3. Accessible Arts Award for Access and Inclusion

In partnership with Accessible Arts, the peak arts and disability organisation in New South Wales, this award recognises organisations and projects that develop and sustain equitable access to arts and culture across NSW.

(K) Accessible Arts Award for Access and Inclusion*

*This category includes exhibitions and engagement programs

4. The ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator

The Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association will present a special award to an NSW Aboriginal Curator in recognition of their work on an outstanding exhibition in the museum, gallery, and Aboriginal cultural sector during the award period.

5. The Volunteer Achievement Award

This award specifically recognises an individual volunteer who has made a significant contribution to their organisation in the previous 12 months.

6. The Volunteer Museum of the Year Award

This award specifically recognises a volunteer-led museum who has made outstanding achievements in the previous 12 months across a range of strategic initiatives.

Eligibility: Who can enter?

You can enter the IMAGinE Awards if you are a NSW public museum or gallery, Aboriginal cultural space (such as a cultural centre or keeping place), not-for-profit organisation such as an artist-run gallery, or a volunteer-run museum or gallery with a physical space that is open to the public on a regular basis.

Organisations that present exhibitions or have collections that are additional to their primary function are not eligible to enter the awards, such as tourist centres. Commercial organisations are also ineligible (such as consultancy or design groups).

In the case where a private or commercial organisation or an individual artist or consultant is working with a partner organisation or business, the nominee should be the museum, gallery, Aboriginal keeping place or cultural centre.

All nominations should align with and/or aim for museum and gallery best practice. For any nomination with a commercial element such as sales or marketing for a private business, this element must be secondary to the primary aims and achievements and will not be considered against criteria by the judging panel.

Eligibility: Who can submit a nomination?

If you are an organisation, an association, a not-for-profit or an individual you can nominate. You can self-nominate or nominate another organisation.

How to submit your nomination

All nomination forms and support material must be submitted online by the closing date via the M&G NSW IMAGinE awards webpage: <https://mgnsw.org.au/sector/support/imagine/>

To save your files for submission, save the file with your organisation's name, the name of the exhibition or project and the category you are entering.

e.g. OurMuseumGallery_Project_EngagementAward.doc

If you require assistance in completing the nomination form for any reason, if you have any questions about eligibility, categories or nomination requirements, or if you experience technical difficulties uploading your nomination please contact M&G NSW via comms@mgnsw.org.au

Nominee benefits

All nominated organisations and individuals will receive the following benefits:

- Nomination listed on the M&G NSW website
- Promotional inclusion on M&G NSW social media
- Inclusion in the 2026 IMAGinE Awards online booklet

- Invitation to the 2026 IMAGinE Awards night

Nomination fees

Thanks to the support of our generous sponsors, Create NSW, AMAGA NSW, RPG NSW, Accessible Arts and ACHAA, there will be no fee to nominate for the IMAGinE Awards in 2026.

Support material

1. For the **Exhibition Projects, Engagement Programs, The Accessible Arts Award for Access and Inclusion** and **The Volunteer Museum Award** categories please submit the following support material with your nomination:

- THREE pages (maximum) of supporting documentation (e.g. web page, image, promotional material). The preferred formats for images are PowerPoint or JPEG

PLUS

- TWO additional high-resolution promotional images representative of the nominated project/program. Images will be used in online and printed promotional material and at the awards presentation (300 dpi jpg max 2MB)

Images should be high quality and capture your project/program. Consider including image with people to better communicate your nomination.

NB: When submitting visual support material, please make sure you include an image list with photo credits etc. Please refer to the relevant nomination form.

2. For **The Volunteer Achievement Award** please submit the following support material with your nomination:

- Up to THREE pages (maximum) of documentation which supports the nomination. This can include images and/or text promotional material. Suggested file formats are JPEG, Word doc, PDF or PowerPoint.

AND

- Summarised bio or resume (maximum 1 page)

AND

- ONE high quality image of the nominated individual + ONE high quality image of the relevant project or organisation (300 dpi JPEGs max. 2MB each). These images will

be used in online and printed promotional material and at the awards presentation. Images may also be used by Museums & Galleries of NSW for promotional and archival purposes.

3. For the **ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator** please submit the following support material with your nomination:

- FIVE pages (maximum) of supporting documentation (e.g. web page, image, promotional material), where each image (or PowerPoint page) constitutes one page.
 - The preferred formats for images are PowerPoint or JPEG
 - If more than three pages/images of support material are submitted, only the first three pages/images will be forwarded to the assessors

AND

- ONE high quality image of the nominated individual Images will be used in online and printed promotional material and at the awards presentation (300 dpi jpg max 2MB)

AND

- ONE high quality image of the relevant project. Images will be used in online and printed promotional material and at the awards presentation (300 dpi jpg max 2MB)

NB: When submitting visual support material, please make sure you include an image list with photo credits etc. Please refer to the relevant nomination form.

Further information

For more information regarding eligibility and the nominations process for the 2026 IMAGinE Awards, consult the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

IMAGinE Awards night

The awards will be presented on Thursday 26 November. Venue to be announced. Tickets will be available via Humanitix.

IMAGinE Awards enquiries:

Museums & Galleries of NSW

Email: comms@mgnswn.org.au

Phone: (02) 9270 3100

Terms and conditions of entry



Major Supporters



Supporters



- The project you are nominating must have occurred wholly or partially within the award period [1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026]
- Permanent and semi-permanent projects can be nominated, but cannot be awarded an IMAGinE Award more than once
- A separate nomination form is required for each nomination.
- An organisation may be nominated for a maximum of 2 projects in each category.
- All nomination and support material must be submitted electronically unless you have approval from Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) to do otherwise. For assistance with submission please contact M&G NSW
- M&G NSW staff and the judging panel may move a nomination from one category to another in consultation with the nominee
- It is within the judges' discretion to determine not to give an award in any given category or, in special circumstances, to give more than one award.
- The decisions of the judging panel are final and no correspondence will be entered into
- By submitting material, you grant M&G NSW unlimited permission to publish and share this material in its original or altered form. M&G NSW reserves the right to use all entries for publicity, educational purposes and reporting
- Submitted material will be published on the M&G NSW website and social media and may be shared with 3rd parties and media for promotional purposes.
- Please keep a copy of your nomination and support material for your own records.
- Upon submitting a nomination you will receive a confirmation email to the email address provided. It is the responsibility of the nominating individual or organisation to check this email and ensure the details are correct. If you do not receive an email please contact M&G NSW to confirm your nomination has been received.

Judging of nominations

Winners in the Exhibition, Engagement and Volunteer Achievement categories will be chosen by the judging panel, which will consist of peers from the NSW museum, gallery, and Aboriginal cultural sector and may include representatives from M&G NSW and award sponsors Australian Museums and Galleries Association NSW and Regional and Public Galleries of NSW. Once the judging panel is confirmed, the names of individual judges will be published on the M&G NSW website.

Each judge will assess and score all eligible nominations individually. The panel then confers to compare scores and make final decisions about award winners and if applicable, highly commended nominations. There is no shortlisting process. It is within the judges' discretion to determine not to give an award in any given category or in special circumstances to give more than one awards.

The Accessible Arts Awards for Access and Inclusion will be judged by a panel made up of Accessible Arts representatives, a staff member from M&G NSW and an independent industry peer.

The ACHAA Award for Excellence by an Aboriginal Curator will be judged by the ACHAA Committee.