

# OBIAA 2026 AWARDS

## Tip Sheet

*What to look for when creating or judging OBIAA Awards*

### Scoring Key

Entries will be judged using a scale of 1-5. Here's what that means:

- 5: **OUTSTANDING:** An extraordinary or insightful approach or result
- 4: Better than average
- 3: **AVERAGE:** An adequate approach or result; professionally competent but not exceptional
- 2: A generally inadequate approach or result
- 1: **POOR:** Not addressed in application

### Tips For Entrants

- Using the submission template provided write your entry/plan and keep it for your files.
- Less is more; keep it to no more than four pages.
- Put supplementary materials and budget into a separate document and upload both documents to the online form. These are not included in the four pages.
- Use the resources provided to help you in writing your submission:
  - Evaluation Form
  - Tip Sheet
  - Scoring Guide (Now included in the BIA Award Evaluation Form)

### The Submission

Use the following information below in addition to the Scoring Guide to help determine which score to give a project.

#### 1. Was the initiative innovative? If it was a project duplicated from another BIA, was there a unique spin put on it?

- Did the entrant clearly identify how unique their initiative was to their BIA?
- Were the steps taken to make this initiative innovative clearly identified with reasons for those steps and how they were determined?
- Was the impact of those steps clearly identified and was it successful?

#### 2. Were the goals and measurable objectives clearly stated and tied back to the organization's needs?

- We recommend one overarching, visionary, unmeasurable goal, such as "Be the safest district in the city," or "Create an invaluable website for members." (*Or include a relevant example*)
- Objectives should be measurable in some way. For example, if your goal was to increase your number of engaged followers by 20% (percentages are encouraged), your objectives could be to increase in likes or comments - this can easily be measured.
- You want to set objectives that measure outcomes versus outputs. You want to create a shift in behaviour in your defined audiences. You want them to start doing something, stop doing something or keep doing something.
- Objectives that measure the implementation of your work (such as "produce the event on budget") aren't recommended. You want to create a shift in behaviour in your defined audiences.
- For example, objective #X could be re-stated as: "Increase by X% the number of members who completed the survey compared to 2019," or "Educate members on XYZ street about the impending construction to the extent that X% surveyed about the flyer handed out door-to-door recalled at least two key messages from it."

- Not all BIAs are able to do surveys of members, but other methods may be employed to gather feedback, share some of those methods.
- The need or opportunity for your organization should be well defined. For example, is improving your reputation or attracting new retailers the real business needs you're trying to address in order to drive visitor traffic in a competitive marketplace? Does the association need more relevant branding to compete with a nearby shopping mall to stay vibrant? (*or the like*)?
- The reason your association picked this project over another is clear as it relates to your business objectives.
- Your project should be addressing a clearly defined business need.

### 3. How effective was the project implementation?

- There is a clear explanation of the strategic thinking you undertook to come to your implementation plan. Be sure to list factors that figured into your decision such as timing, resources available, external forces at work, issues related to the physical district, street disorder was increasing, issues impacting the association, etc.
- Information is provided on how the initiative was accessible (i.e. ramps provided, accessible spaces identified, special marketing initiative, etc.) and inclusive (i.e. variety of partners reached out to, marketing was appropriate, etc.)
- What partners, staff or volunteers were involved and how?
- Identify how you worked with the Municipality/BIA in order to implement this initiative?

### 4. How well were the initiative's goal and objectives met?

- Ideally, you need to include some kind of formal evaluation to measure your objectives, such as a "man on the street" survey after your XXX event, a written survey, a focus group, etc. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money, but how do you know you met your objectives if you don't measure against them? Anecdotal feedback is a nice addition, but not enough.
- You need to measure outcomes versus outputs. You want to quantify a shift in behaviour in your defined audiences. You want to measure if they started doing something, stopped doing something or kept doing something.

### 5. Is the initiative replicable?

- Submission has a clearly documented plan, budget, steps identified for a BIA to replicate initiative easily.
- Provides tips on how to bring partners on board and funding sources.

### 6. Were all the following items included in the submission? Need or opportunity, target audience, budget, partnerships, accessibility, and results.

- You must include budget details, even if it is just high level.
- What about other resources? Note how/if you used internal resources such as board members or staff. Were external resources such as community volunteers used? If so, why, how many, and did this save you money or was it a strategic decision tied to your business need? Explain.
- Include the steps you took to identify the target audience and opportunity.
- Which partners did you work with and why - how did you bring them on board.
- Were sponsors obtained - perhaps include a sponsorship package as one of your supporting documents, include information on in-kind sponsors.
- How was accessibility (i.e. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Compliance) taken into account - i.e. Did you work with anyone to ensure needs were met? Did you provide training or accommodation for volunteer's/partners/ participants to ensure needs were addressed.

### 7. How successful were they at identifying barriers (i.e. budget, capacity, resources, opposition etc.) and how did they overcome them?

- Make sure that barriers are clearly identified, and concrete examples of solutions are outlined.
- If staffing was a challenge, how did you recruit volunteers? How did you train your volunteers?

- Was anyone opposed to the initiative and if so why, were you able to bring them around or did they see the benefit in the end results?

#### 8. How well did members engage with this initiative and what were the benefits to them?

- How did you identify how the initiative would benefit your members? Is this a benefit that members had requested? How did you measure the benefit (surveys, data tracking, etc.)?
- How many members from your intended audience participated in the initiative? Is this more member engagement than usual?
- How did you engage members? Include tips on communication/ pre and post follow up.

### Tips For Judges

Use the Scoring Guide to help you determine the best score for each element of a submission. Read each item in the Scoring Guide carefully to make sure you choose the most relevant score. Some questions or elements may not be applicable for all categories or entrants – if clarification is needed please reach out to OBIAA at [info@obiaa.com](mailto:info@obiaa.com)

### Comments/Feedback

The comments are very important for entrants – and for the credibility of the competition – even more important than the scores. You should spend as much or more time on the comments section as you do on the scoring portion. And don't include just a few words. Fully explain what you mean. Take as much space as necessary; the electronic form allows for this.

Entrants look to the feedback section to explain two things:

1. Why they scored what they did (where they hit the mark; what they missed)
2. How they can improve next time (specific examples)

#### Tips for giving feedback:

- **Be constructive.** The objective should be to encourage the entrant to put together a better entry next time. Balance positive and constructive comments. Think how you would feel receiving the comments you've made.
- **Give specific, practical advice on how to improve the entry.** For example, instead of saying "there were no measurable objectives," say "Make objectives more measurable, for example, re-write objective #1 to read:..." (*then rewrite the objective in a measurable way so they can learn from your knowledge*).
- **Focus on the entry submission not on the initiative.** Avoid recommendations on how they could improve the initiative, entrants are not submitting to improve the initiative. Feedback is welcome on how to improve the Award submission so they could have a successful award application next time.
- **Be encouraging.** Some entries may be first efforts by relatively junior practitioners. It should be a learning experience. We don't want people to be so discouraged that they never try again.
- Be sure to **end on a high note.** Don't hesitate to include comments such as: "Making the changes noted above will make this entry a winner. Enter it next year or in the upcoming XXX awards." Or "Great work!" or "Try again!" or "A bit more attention to details noted could make all the difference next time."

### Glossary

**Funding Sources:** Sponsorships, grants, in-kind donations, etc.

**Outputs** are the tangible activities or products you deliver - for example, the number of events held, newsletters sent, or social posts published.



**Outcomes:** Measure the impact or change that results - such as increased member participation, improved public perception, stronger business collaboration, or new behaviors adopted by your audience.

**Partnerships:** Community groups (volunteer team), Municipality, other BIAs, Chamber of Commerce, or different organizations.

**Target Audience:** The specific group of people you aim to reach, influence, or engage through your initiative. This might include business and property owners, local residents, visitors, municipal partners, or community organizations - essentially, anyone whose behavior, awareness, or participation you want to impact.

**In-Kind Sponsors:** Provide goods or services in lieu of cash sponsorships.

**AODA:** <https://www.aoda.ca/>