

2025 Call for Entries for the 52nd Annual IES Illumination Awards

This document lays out the submissions process and should answer most questions you may have about the awards. We look forward to your submissions and wish you all the best of luck!

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About the IES Illumination Awards (IA)

The IES Illumination Awards (IA) program recognizes individuals for professionalism, ingenuity and originality in lighting design based on the individual merit of each entry. Judges are selected from a broad professional spectrum representing knowledge of lighting and design excellence. The judging system is entirely based on how well the lighting design meets the program criteria. The Illumination Awards program is not a competition. We strongly recommend that applicants read through the [eligibility/entry rules](#) and [FAQs](#) before submitting to the program.

New in 2025

1. **Impact Statement:** During the awards submission process, a **new Impact Statement** will be asked and included in judging of the project. Submitters will be asked to explain **“How does this project positively enhance or impact the community it is serving?”** in their submission. This additional scored question replaces the discretionary points judges could award to projects.

The impact statement should highlight how the project makes a difference in the community where it is located. A few examples are ensuring the lighting for an outdoor project doesn't negatively impact or shine into an adjacent community, designing with the understanding of local customs and abilities, using an equitable process of community engagement and collaboration, or building community through light. It can also be used to identify how your designed empowered spaces that serve historically

under resourced, neglected, and/or marginal communities with quality lighting designs.

2. **New Category:** The Illumination Award for Experiential Lighting Design, sponsored by ETC, Inc. recognizes those projects that use the design of lighting as art or for effect. The projects submitted in this category are themed or immersive environments, whether temporary, permanent, or seasonal.

The Experiential Lighting Design award encompasses interior and exterior projects and permanent, temporary, or seasonal installations. This can be a park with interactive elements for visitors, a spectacular holiday display, or an amusement park ride, to name a few examples.

How to Submit

Projects can only be submitted through the IA Submission Portal. Entrants should visit <https://iesilluminationawards.secure-platform.com> to find the entry rules and submission FAQ and start your project submissions.

When submitting, you will be prompted to choose an IES Section. ***This should be the section where the lead designer is from, not the project.*** If you are from outside of North America, please choose “International.”

If there is no active Section listed, the project should be submitted to the Section closest to the location of the lead designer. Your project will still be accepted and entered for judging.

Deadlines

Early Bird Submissions: January 2-24, 2025

Regular Submissions: January 25- February 21, 2025

Both deadlines are 11:59 PM US Eastern

Entry Fees

Early Bird Submissions: IES Members \$265 USD / Non-Members \$365 USD

Regular Submissions: IES Members \$320 / Non-Members \$420

At least one person on the project design team must be an IES member in order to qualify for the member pricing. Their IES member number will be asked for during the submission.

Eligibility

Entrants

- Anyone may enter a project for an Illumination Award, including IES members, non-members, and agents, with the exclusion of IES staff, IES Board of Directors, and manufacturers.
- Submitters should submit their project to the Section of the lead designer. If there is no active Section, the project should be submitted to the Section closest to the location of the lead designer. Your project will still be accepted and entered for judging.

Projects

- Any permanent lighting installation can be submitted to the Illumination Awards. There is an exemption for the Experiential Lighting Design award, which allows for temporary, permanent, or seasonal displays.
- The installation must have been completed during the 24 months preceding the January program date listed.
- Projects may be entered only once using the IA submission portal. The nominator must check with all parties to eliminate duplicate entries.
- Different areas of the same project may be submitted as separate lighting or controls project entries. Each of these entries must have its own distinguishable title and additional entry fee. Each of these entries will be judged separately.
- Projects may be entered only once using the IA submission portal. The nominator must check with all parties to eliminate duplicate entries.
- All entries previously judged in prior Illumination Awards programs will be rejected.

Submission Rules and Regulations

Each project entry must include:

- **Project Summary**

Up to a three hundred (300) word maximum narrative is allowed to present a project.

PLEASE NOTE: The names of the designers, the name of the design firm, equipment manufacturers or specific brands is not allowed anywhere in the narrative. Any reference or endorsement of a commercial product is not allowed. Submittals with this information will be disqualified. However, proper names of places (i.e., Waldorf Astoria, Verizon, Target) in the narrative is admissible.

TIP—It is beneficial to address criteria from the specified category award score sheet. For example, address Energy and Budget if this was a significant challenge or accomplishment. Commenting on these and other factors can help you present a compelling project.

- **Images**

Up to 10 high-resolution images (photos, sketches or renderings) per entry will be accepted. Multiple images per slide are allowed, but each image will count towards the

maximum allotment of 10.

Digital renderings that are identified as such are acceptable—if they are accompanied by a photograph of the actual installation, to demonstrate the actual design and installed results. Each rendering and accompanying photographs will be counted individually.

Images must be in JPEG format and at least 1024px wide and 768px high.

PROHIBITED: Fill light, modified images, digital enhancement.

TIP—Don't include 10 images if they don't help tell a compelling project story; sometimes less is more.

TIP—Photos taken during daylight hours may not adequately present the lighting design.

- **Image Narratives**

Each image can be described in a 25-word narrative that explains that particular image. This narrative is in addition to the introductory summary for each project.

TIP—Use this to tell the judges what they are seeing. An image without a narrative is difficult to judge.

- **OPTIONAL: Video Submission**

Video submission must NOT contain any narrative (written, spoken or music). Total video length allowed is a maximum of one (1) minute. Video must be a mov, m4v or mp4 format. You may describe the video in up to 25 words in the video narrative. *Still images as a slide show are not accepted as a video and will be disqualified.*

TIP—Watch for flicker in your video, which could jeopardize your chance of receiving an award. A video of simple color-changing lighting can appear pretty amateur if it appears more like 'chase' lights.

Use by IES and LD+A

IES may use the projects submitted to promote the Society's programs and services. All entry materials including photos and narratives, can be used without restriction by LD+A, the magazine of the IES. The LD+A magazine will have reproduction privileges of photographs and scripts without charge to the Society. The Lead Lighting Designer must inform the owner and all others involved or associated in the project design of participation in the Illumination Awards program and that the submission may be published in the LD+A magazine. The owner's name and location may be withheld for privacy reasons.

Awards Categories

Illumination Award for Control Innovation, sponsored by the Lighting Controls Association, a Council within NEMA

Advanced lighting control solutions can provide significant energy savings, flexibility and other benefits in buildings. This prestigious award recognizes good lighting projects that exemplify the effective use of lighting controls in nonresidential applications.

Note: The LCA will have permission to publish the award recipient and any other entrants on its website as education content, including photography, giving all appropriate credits, including IES Illumination Awards Program and the manufacturer(s).

[Click here for score sheet](#)

Illumination Award for Interior Lighting Design, sponsored by Edwin F. Guth

In 1902 Edwin F. Guth founded the St. Louis Brass Company and later renamed it the Edwin F. Guth Company. Mr. Guth's profound creativity, entrepreneurialism and focus to improve interior lighting are partially represented through 147 patents awarded to him prior to his passing in 1962. This award recognizes exceptional interior lighting projects that balance the functional illumination of space with the artistic application of light to enhance the occupant's experience.

[Click here for score sheet](#)

Illumination Award for Outdoor Lighting Design

The Illumination Award for Outdoor Lighting Design recognizes excellence in lighting design and application in all aspects of exterior lighting. The program celebrates achievements in aesthetics, applied technical acumen, creative solutions to demanding site conditions and advancements to the industry in outdoor lighting applications. The goal of the program is to further the understanding, knowledge and function of outdoor lighting as a critical aspect of the built environment.

[Click here for score sheet](#)

Illumination Award for Energy and Environmental Design

The Energy and Environmental Design Award recognizes quality lighting installations in commercial and industrial buildings that incorporate advanced energy-saving strategies and environmentally responsible solutions into the overall design.

[Click here for score sheet](#)

Illumination Award for Experiential Lighting Design, sponsored by ETC, Inc.

The Experiential Design Award recognizes those projects that use the design of lighting as art or for effect. This category recognizes themed or immersive environments, whether temporary, permanent, or seasonal.

The Experiential Lighting Design award encompasses interior and exterior projects and permanent, temporary, or seasonal installations. This can be a park with interactive elements for visitors, a spectacular holiday display, or an amusement park ride, to name a few examples.

[Click here for score sheet](#)

Award Levels

- Section Award: Awarded at the local section level judging. Projects scoring adequately at the section move up for additional judging in the global judging and are eligible for the awards noted below.
- Award of Merit: Recognizes meritorious contribution to lighting design.
- Special Citation: Recognizes superior elements for a portion of a project. Presented at the annual IA Gala.
- Award of Excellence: Awarded for an exceptional contribution to the art and science of light. Presented at the annual IA Gala.
- Award of Distinction: The Society's top Illumination Award level, awarded for extraordinary achievement in lighting design. Presented at the annual IA Gala.

Judging Process

All judging is conducted 'blind' or anonymously using the program score sheets. Judges do not know any project details at any stage of judging.

[Merit Judging Info](#)

Submission Tips and FAQs

Are submitters allowed to revisit a previous submission?

Once the submission has been finalized and payment is made, submitters will no longer have access to their submission. Submitters should save their submission as a file document to access for future reference. Submitters can save their submission by clicking on "in-progress" or "in cart" in their Dashboard. There will be an option to save the submission as a pdf document. This can only be done before submitting the payment for the submission.

Can submitters edit their project once it has been submitted?

No. Once a project has been processed, modifications can no longer be made.

Why did my project not receive an Illumination Award?

Although IES cannot provide details about why you did not receive an award, please refer to the submission tutorial and score sheets. Try to talk to your local IA Chair about how you can improve your submission.

Can the Interior Lighting Design Award include residential projects?

Interior design is for any interior project — commercial or residential — anything that is inside.

What is the process for international award recipients attending the Illumination Awards Gala?

IES will provide the conference registration and award recipient letter to assist with visa arrangements. Unfortunately, this is the only form of assistance the IES will provide. IES is not responsible for completing any forms issued through the U.S. Department of State or Customs.

Can award recipients order duplicate award certificates?

Anyone may purchase a duplicate certificate. You may send your request to Michael Austerlitz at mausterlitz@ies.org

Is a designer allowed to name the client in their summary and image descriptions? Also, does the designer need to refrain from using the city or state where the project is located?

City/State, and the owner's name is allowed. You may wish to be careful if the owner is a designer or design firm that people may confuse as listing the design team.

For example, "This new restaurant, Burger Shack, located in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania wanted to evoke a feeling of XYZ...." would be acceptable.