



CALL FOR ENTRIES
2026

Celebrating outstanding media
thinking in Aotearoa

WELCOME

TO THE

2026

BEACON AWARDS

ON TIME DEADLINE:

23 April 2026

LATE DEADLINE:

30 April 2026

AWARDS SHOW:

2 July 2026

A WORD FROM OUR CONVENOR

WELCOME

The beginning of a new year offers an opportunity to take stock, reflect, and build on the successes of 2025. While the year brought its fair share of challenges including a tough economic environment marked by slow growth and ongoing uncertainty, it was also a period of change and progress across the media industry, with some developments welcomed and others more challenging.

One of the most significant shifts has been the rapid acceleration of automation and AI, prompting media agencies to rethink how these technologies can be used in meaningful and effective ways while continuing to deliver value for clients. As a result, agency value propositions have continued to evolve.

The media vendor landscape has also remained in flux, shaped by acquisition and consolidation. Throughout this change, agencies and media owners have continued to work closely together to deliver strong outcomes for clients, benefiting the industry as a whole.

Against this backdrop, the resilience, creativity and innovation shown across the industry has been impressive, with no shortage of outstanding mahi delivered throughout the year.

It is once again time to call for entries for the Beacon Awards. The Beacon Awards provide an opportunity to celebrate our best and most innovative people, teams, ideas and technologies and the role media plays in helping businesses across the motu achieve their objectives. Winning a Beacon is no easy feat, and being named a finalist is a significant achievement in itself.

If you are a first-time entrant and haven't written a Beacon entry before, take advantage of the industry resources available. This includes a newly launched writers guide which will be available in late February on the Comms Council website. Review entries from prior years (both Beacons and Effies) and seek guidance from those who have entered and won before.

Start writing your entry as early as possible. It always takes longer than anticipated, so allow plenty of time for peer review, feedback and rewriting, it's worth the effort. Be clear and concise in your storytelling and ensure your results data is well organised. The results section is critically important and often takes time to finalise, particularly where client approvals are required. Make sure results clearly link back to campaign objectives, as this is an area judges will closely scrutinise.

Please also take a moment to understand what has changed this year. There are changes to scoring allocations (which should guide you in how you distribute your effort across the entry paper), changes to word counts, and some exciting new categories. There's a new category - Positive Change – in list B, and two new categories for Emerging Talent across both Agencies and Media Businesses in list C.

The Beacon Awards remain a significant event on the industry calendar, and we're excited to see the calibre of work entered in 2026. We look forward to being inspired by the ideas, innovation and effectiveness on show, and to celebrating together on 2nd July.

We wish all the best with your entries.



Louise Bond
Convenor

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN 2026

WHAT'S NEW

CATEGORY CHANGES

We have added three new categories for 2026. Full details of these categories can be found on pages 13 - 20.

POSITIVE CHANGE

Campaigns that are designed to have a positive impact on society, people or planet. Complementing the existing category of DEI - Community Engagement. Whereas Community Engagement is focused on campaigns engaging minority or historically under-served communities, Positive Change is likely to engage broad audiences to effect outcomes for specific causes, communities or movements.

EMERGING TALENT - MEDIA AGENCY

Seeking to award brilliant rising stars. This category is looking for agency professionals, in their first five years of agency experience, making a dent on our industry, both in terms of client outcomes and agency culture.

EMERGING TALENT - MEDIA BUSINESS

We're looking for the rising stars on the media business side of our industry. In their first five years of media business experience, the winner will already be well known across the industry, building relationships that deliver results and contributing to their organisation's culture.

WORD COUNT

We've updated the word count across categories.

For most categories we've allocated 1200-1500 words for the response. If your story can be told simply in under 1200 words, you'll likely be thanked by the judges. However, if more words are needed to provide critical context or deeper understanding of complex technical aspects of your entry, you can use the upper limit of 1500 words. Sustained Success, which requires multi-year explanation, remains 1800 words.

SCORING

In past years, there have been significant differences in scoring rubrics across entry papers. Most notably, the scoring allocation for Background and Challenge has been low. However, the review panel has determined that this has disincentivised providing much of the critical context (category understanding, competitive environment, historical brand performance) that judges look for in evaluating entries, and in particular, examining results.

Scoring has been adjusted accordingly - to guide entrants about the relative importance of each section.

IMPORTANT DATES

ON TIME DEADLINE

THURSDAY 23 APRIL 4PM

LATE DEADLINE

THURSDAY 30 APRIL 4PM

MEDIA AGENCY
OF THE YEAR DEADLINE

THURSDAY 14 MAY 4PM

CATEGORY JUDGING

TUESDAY 26 MAY – TUESDAY 16 JUNE

INTERNATIONAL JUDGING

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE - THURSDAY 25 JUNE

AWARDS SHOW

THURSDAY 2 JULY



HOW

TO ENTER

Entry forms and associated documentation are available from www.commscouncil.nz/awards/beacon.

Please ensure you use the correct entry form for the category being entered.

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

The entrant agrees that the Comms Council will not accept responsibility for errors or omissions reproduced in award publicity material, or for work lost or damaged. The entrant grants the Comms Council permission to show the entries at the Beacon Awards show and at other times deemed appropriate after the Beacon Awards show.

It is a condition of entry that the Comms Council reserve the right and shall be

permitted at all times to use at their discretion any material submitted for the Beacon Awards on the Comms Council website, in promotional and educational books, videos, articles and such other means as they deem appropriate for case study purposes. The entrant has to have been responsible for the development of the media strategy.

ENTRY FORMS

Entry forms are available to download from the Comms Council website.

Each category has a unique form; entries submitted with the incorrect category form are considered ineligible.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

The written entry is the key part of your submission; however, you must submit the following support material:

MEDIA SCHEDULE

Please provide a media schedule as a supporting file. Make sure to include ALL media utilised in the campaign with % value of each.

CAMPAIGN MATERIAL

The purpose of campaign material is to illustrate the campaign and not to be a sales tool that 'promotes' the award entry. This is to help judges fully appreciate how consumers experienced the campaign. Campaign material can be anything from static examples of advertising through to original video or audio content created. Campaign material is meant to support, not supplant or sell the written entry.

Campaign material must be provided in digital format ONLY and you cannot submit more than 10 files. This could include TV ads, video content created, websites, PDFs of print ads, etc.

Please follow these guidelines for submitting campaign material:

- Submit only in PDF, JPG, MP3, MP4 or MOV. Please ensure that all files are high resolution.
- All photos must be submitted in JPG format, minimum 300ppi.

WORD LIMITS

Word limits differ by category, so please ensure you have checked the restrictions for the category you are entering.

Graphs are granted a 10-word exclusion threshold from the word limit. Schedules are not counted in the word limit.

SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY

Head to this year's entry portal and login; you may have to register for an account.

You will be asked to enter:

- Your entry title
- The name of the campaign
- The category you're entering
- Date of first media appearance
- Date of final media appearance (if applicable)
- Client name, network and location (state and country)
- The brand and the countries in which the campaign ran
- Any additional lead agency and contributing agency details (name, city)

- The publishing permission of your entry
- PDF upload of your written entry
- Campaign Material
- Media Schedule
- PDF upload of your publishable entry (if required)
- Credits of contributors to the campaign and/or entry (name, job title and company)
- A 'hero image' for use in finalist and winners publications, including show material
- The sustainability efforts of the campaign
- Your agreement to this year's T&C's

THE PROCESS OF

SCRUTINEERING

The scrutineering process was introduced to help eliminate disqualifications through basic errors. The scrutineering process is conducted by the Comms Council Awards Team and carried out after all entry deadlines have passed.

Should the Comms Council find any entries that do not meet the entry requirements above, that entry will be returned marked as not complying with the entry requirements. The entrant has the option to tweak their entry (as per the recommendations made by the Comms Council) and re-submit their entry upon payment of an additional fixed scrutineering payment of \$200 + GST per entry that is re-submitted.

A deadline will be given to each entrant by the Comms Council, by which time all outstanding issues must be resolved. There is no limit on the times the entry can be re-submitted, but the final version must be submitted within the deadline with all issues resolved otherwise it will risk being disqualified at judging.

Note that the scrutineering process looks only at the “hygiene factors” below. Complying with scrutineering requirements is not a guarantee that an entry will not be disqualified on other grounds. An entry that does not pass scrutineering and is not successfully resubmitted will forfeit the original entry fee.

CORRECT ENTRY FORM USED

Entries not entered on the official Comms Council entry form, handwritten or incomplete in any way will be required to resubmit. Please note every category has a separate (different) entry form.

WORD LIMIT

The word limit will be strictly enforced. Any entry that exceeds the word count beyond 10% for the category entered will be returned.

Please note you should only count those words in the white answer boxes of the entry form. Do not count the total words on the entry form. Table/graph captions should not be included in the word count provided they are less than 10 words, e.g. “Figure 1. Market share for Shampoo category.”

AGENCY BLINDNESS

Any entry that cites agency names or logos in any entry form (or support/campaign material) will be returned. Please note this includes agency logos on media schedules. This extends to any website or video hosting sites if applicable.

CREATIVE MATERIAL

No creative material/pictorial elements can be submitted in the body of the written entry. Graphs/charts are acceptable in the body of the entry.

DEADLINES AND FEES

DEADLINES

- Entries and campaign material must be uploaded by 4:00 pm 30 April 2026.
- Member rates apply to fully paid-up Comms Council Members at competition entry or gala dinner dates.

ENTRY FEES/LATE PENALTY FEES

	STANDARD ENTRY:	ON TIME DEADLINE ENTRIES:	LATE DEADLINE ENTRIES:
Members & Sponsors	\$525+GST	\$825+GST	
Non-Members	\$650+GST	\$1050+GST	

EMERGING TALENT CATEGORIES:

\$250 + GST per entry

INSPIRING INDIVIDUAL:

Free to enter

SCRUTINEERING FEES:

\$200 + GST per entry that is re-submitted

Payments can be made by:

- Visa or Mastercard through the online form.
Note there is a 3.2% surcharge when paying by credit card.
- Bank Transfer to the Commercial Communications Council

Bank: BNZ
Branch: Ponsonby
Account: 02 0248 0238645 00
Reference: Beacon Awards 2026 + YourAgency/Company Name

Payment is now required on entry submission. Entries will not proceed to judging unless all monies are received. Entry Fees are non-refundable.



CATEGORIES

Media campaigns launched in the 14 months from 1 Jan 2025 – end of February 2026 are eligible for entry.

ELIGIBILITY

The Beacon Awards is an agency-blind competition. Therefore, agency names should not be cited in the entry form, support or campaign material or on any other materials that will be seen by the judges.

Please note, campaigns that do not adhere to the eligibility requirements may be disqualified and fees will not be refunded.

Media campaigns launched in the 14 months from 1 Jan 2025 – end February 2026 are eligible for entry. Campaigns may have been introduced earlier but must have run during this period and have data relevant to the qualifying time period. The results provided must also be within the campaign eligibility period but can extend to the end of March 2025 if directly attributable to activity run in the eligibility period.

In the event of a crossover from the previous year, where a 2025 campaign is still eligible for 2026, the case history must be rewritten, clearly demonstrating new elements of the campaign or new results.

The awards are primarily for New Zealand originated campaigns, however, should an entry be based on a media strategy and media idea originating outside of New Zealand, this must be clearly stated so that this can be considered in the judging process.

Sustained Success (Category 20): Advertising campaigns that have been consistently in the market in NZ for a minimum of three years from at latest 28 February 2023 are eligible for entry.

Charity Entries cannot be entered into any other categories.

ENTRY LIMIT

All categories are listed into three sections:

LIST A – Categories 1 - 8 (Only 1 entry permitted). Please note Charity campaigns can ONLY be entered into Category 8.

LIST B – Categories 9 - 19 (Up to 3 entries permitted).

LIST C – Categories 20 - 26 (No entry limit).

Best in Show cannot be entered.

LIST A

Only 1 entry permitted

LIST B

Up to 3 entries permitted

LIST C

No entry limit

1. Social Marketing/Public Service	9. Small Budget	20. Sustained Success
2. Retail/Etail	10. Content	21. Sales Team of the Year
3. FMCG	11. Technology	22. Media Business of the Year
4. Consumer Durables	12. Data	23. Media Agency of the Year
5. Financial Services	13. Creative Media Idea	24. Emerging Talent - Media Agency
6. Utility & Telco Services	14. Insight	25. Emerging Talent - Media Business
7. Other Consumer Services	15. Communications Strategy	26. Inspiring Individual Award
8. Charity	16. Most Effective	
	17. Best Collaboration	
	18. DEI Community Engagement	
	19. Positive Change	

LIST A

1. SOCIAL MARKETING/ PUBLIC SERVICE

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises uses of media that have succeeded in meeting the objectives of government or publicly funded bodies. Typically, these include campaigns from government departments, local bodies, tertiary education institutions or for a community service. The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had an identifiable and direct contribution in achieving set campaign objectives.

2. RETAIL/ETAIL

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises uses of media in the area of retail/etail. This includes fashion, clothing, accessories, and fast food and also incorporates online retail. The judges are looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had an identifiable and direct contribution in achieving set retail objectives and that success is not the result of other factors including pricing or sale activity.

3. FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises media campaigns across the entire spectrum of FMCG. This can include food, grocery, household products, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, toiletries, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and pet. The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had a direct contribution in achieving set campaign objectives.

4. CONSUMER DURABLES

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises media campaigns that achieve success for products that are not purchased regularly or those that have high involvement decision making. This could include motor vehicles, white goods, brown goods, household furniture and electronic goods. The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had a direct contribution in achieving set campaign objectives.

5. FINANCIAL SERVICES

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises media campaigns that achieve success for companies whose main focus is providing a financial service to a consumer. The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had a direct contribution in helping achieve set campaign objectives.

6. UTILITY & TELCO SERVICES

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises media campaigns that achieve success for companies whose main focus is providing a utility or telecommunication service to a consumer. This could include power, internet and phone services. The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had a direct contribution in helping achieve set campaign objectives.

LIST A

7. OTHER CONSUMER SERVICES

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises media campaigns that achieve success for companies whose main focus is providing a service to a consumer. This could include airlines, tourism and entertainment (TV, music, movies, or gaming). The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had a direct contribution in helping achieve set campaign objectives.

8. CHARITY

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

ENTRIES IN THIS CATEGORY CANNOT BE ENTERED IN OTHER CATEGORIES

This category is seeking to identify campaigns that make the greatest contribution to support charities, appeals, fundraising or various not-for-profit community programmes. The award may recognise innovation in media thinking but this is not mandatory. The judges will be looking for proof that the media strategy and execution has had a direct contribution in helping achieve set campaign objectives. This category is strictly for not-for-profit organisations only including registered and unregistered charities. Charity entries cannot be entered in other categories.

LIST B

9. SMALL BUDGET

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category is open to any campaign with a total combined campaign cost to client of less than \$100,000. All entries must prove they are a stand-alone campaign as opposed to a single execution within a larger campaign.

The judges will be looking for entries that put the perceived budget constraints behind them to develop brilliant strategic thinking and outstanding activation to deliver results that punched way above the campaign's weight.

10. CONTENT

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category rewards campaigns that demonstrate a sound understanding of the role of content in delivering outstanding business outcomes for clients. Entries must clearly articulate why strategic use of content was the key to the campaign's success, and how it was delivered in clever, creative, or surprising ways to be most effective in addressing the client's marketing challenge/s.

Entrants should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the channels used, whether social media networks, blogs, television, editorial, radio, podcasts, apps or other digital platforms. Judges will be looking for activity that connected a community or audience to a brand through content, and that delivered outstanding business results beyond views and engagement.

11. TECHNOLOGY

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category celebrates the role of technology in driving client success. Specifically, where technology has enhanced the development, implementation or outcome of a media campaign or activity.

The technology could be applied across all elements of the campaign, or to a particular component but there will need to be evidence of it being either: using existing technology/platforms in an innovative or distinctive way OR a proprietary or first to NZ market technology. Judges will be looking to understand what was innovative about the technology and how it was applied to the media challenge, why it was a good fit for the brand or business problem, how it impacted or connected with the target audience to deliver outstanding campaign results.

12. DATA

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category seeks to recognise media approaches where data was the fundamental driver or significant influencer of strategy and campaign results.

Your entry must clearly articulate a specific data insight or novel approach to data usage and demonstrate how it directly influenced or fundamentally changed the media approach (e.g. targeting, channel mix, or personalisation). Success must be demonstrated through results where the impact is attributable solely to the data-led insight or use of data itself, separate from any technology used for activation. Additionally, entries must show that this innovative use of data was an agency-led initiative.

The entry does not need to be confined to a single campaign (it may cover an always-on strategy or a subset), but its overall award-worthiness must be clearly contextualised for the judges.

If your data source is proprietary research leading to an insight you may want to consider entering the Insight category instead.

LIST B

13. CREATIVE MEDIA IDEA

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises invention or innovation within a channel or property that was driven by consumer, data or brand insight and creative thinking. Judges are looking for ideas that drive tangible benefit to the consumer or to the client's communications objectives.

14. INSIGHT

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises how the use of insight, analytics or market intelligence has resulted in media campaign and business success. Judges will look for entries that demonstrate how an agency has uncovered an insight, how this insight has shaped the media strategy development and execution and the business success that this has delivered.

Sources of insight could vary from proprietary research to social listening through to quantitative or qualitative studies. The insight section of the entry will account for 40% of the judge's score.

If your insight is derived from a clever data strategy you may want to enter the Data category instead.

15. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category celebrates strategic excellence. Judges are looking for a cohesive communications strategy with a central idea at its heart. It should show a carefully researched and well thought-out action plan designed to meet a clearly defined challenge. This should include novel ways in which media channels have been used, each with a clear link to the strategic idea.

The winning entry will also have clearly articulated the insights used to inspire the communications strategy. The strategy section of the entry will account for 40% of the judges' score.

16. MOST EFFECTIVE

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises meeting a challenge and succeeding. Judges are looking for evidence that the communication drove a positive outcome or exceeded objectives. This could include generating positive business results (e.g., market share, sales value, profit), shifting brand health measures (e.g. consideration, preference, perceptions), or changing people's behaviour (e.g. buying patterns or social habits). It will focus on effectiveness of a campaign above all other considerations – the results section of the entry will account for 40% of the judge's score.

All entries must include figures showing the campaign's direct impact on stated objectives (indexes will suffice).

17. COLLABORATION

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category is open to media owner/partner, clients, and agencies, and is designed to celebrate work that is only made possible by the close collaboration of two or more partner(s). This category can be entered by either the media owner/partner, client, or agency.

The judges will be looking to understand multiple layers as to why this collaboration was not just good, but great. How was strong collaboration, or indeed a new way of collaborating, critical in delivering a better overall result? How did the parties involved break through the norm? How did each party play a distinct individual role that made the whole greater than the sum of its parts? How complex was this collaboration? What hurdles did you face along the way? Ultimately the judges need to understand how this collaboration delivered results for the client beyond what could have been achieved with a single partner. Entries can be proactive sales proposals or responses to briefs, as long as the partners have worked together to execute and enhance.

LIST B

18. DEI COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category applies to any campaigns, brand or non-profit, whose success was dependent on effectively and authentically connecting with specific cultural, ethnic, or under-served groups or communities (example: Māori, LGBTQIA+, disabled people, Pacific Peoples, etc.). If the entry had multiple audiences, it is necessary to demonstrate results for the specific audience detailed in the entry.

Judges will be interested in not only the direct results of the work, but also the broader impacts of the work including the process of developing the work (e.g. journey you took to ensure authentic and meaningful connection with the community), and the indirect impact of the work (e.g. how the work either challenged or reinforced existing narratives about the community to a broader audience).

Judges may not be familiar with your particular audience, so this is your opportunity to showcase the details that they may miss.

19. POSITIVE CHANGE

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category celebrates work with objectives designed to have a positive impact on society, people and the planet. Diversity and inclusivity initiatives or campaigns targeting broad audiences on issues such as inequality, sustainability, poverty, prejudice, or disabilities. The entry will need to demonstrate that efforts have measurably shifted audience behaviour towards better choices and/or changed beliefs or perceptions by integrating relevant socially aware messaging into their marketing communications. Entries could be either for commercial enterprises, brands, governments and not-for-profit organisations or philanthropic trusts.

This category is likely to be targeting a broad audience to effect change for a specific issue or community. If your work is specifically focused on communicating with under-served communities, it is more suitable for category 18.

LIST C

20. SUSTAINED SUCCESS

Word Limit: 1800

This category recognises both the success and the difficulty in maintaining a consistent approach to media communications across three years or more. Judges will be looking for evidence of clear strategic thinking that has significantly contributed to the success of campaigns that have been consistently in market across the years that the campaign has run.

Judges will be looking for a clear demonstration of how the campaign has remained consistent, but the entry can also include additional thinking and execution that has kept the approach relevant and up-to-date from year to year. The effectiveness and results achieved should accurately reflect the objectives and media strategy. The judges want to see clarity of thinking, identification and application of insights and innovation. It's important to remember that a campaign founded on a sound, solid and evolving strategy can be as effective as one containing significant innovation.

21. SALES TEAM OF THE YEAR

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises excellence within the crucial media owners' sales function. Open to both individual or team entries.

The Judges (Comms Council Media Committee) will be looking for evidence of a clear strategic roadmap that allowed for the delivery of outstanding business performance against well-defined KPIs. Examples of innovative campaign case studies and a solution-based approach to selling are more likely to resonate with the judges.

22. MEDIA BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Word Limit: 1200 - 1500

This category recognises the year's outstanding Media Business. The judges (Comms Council Media Committee) will be looking for the business that has set a clear vision and strategy and then implemented that strategy with success.

In this case, success will be assessed from a range of perspectives including financial, industry engagement and reputation, audience growth and/or engagement. The Comms Council Media Committee reserves the right to not award in this category if no entry meets the judging standard.

23. MEDIA AGENCY OF THE YEAR

Word Limit: 1800

The award will be given to the Comms Council Agency whose business has made the greatest overall improvements to their business over the past year. It is open to Comms Council member media agencies of any size. This award is selected by the panel of international judges.

LIST C

24. EMERGING TALENT - MEDIA AGENCY

Word Limit: 1200

Recognising individuals who have achieved incredible things in the past 18 months and who are making a serious mark on the New Zealand media industry. We are looking for individuals on the rise who are already being acknowledged for their contribution today, not only on their clients' business but on the agency that they work within.

Nominees must have less than five years' agency experience at the time of the entry deadline.

A shortlist of entrants will be interviewed by a panel of industry leaders.

25. EMERGING TALENT - MEDIA BUSINESS

Word Limit: 1200

Recognising individuals who have achieved incredible things in the past 18 months and who are making a serious mark on the New Zealand media industry. We are looking for individuals on the rise who are already being acknowledged for their contribution today, building strong industry relationships and making a tangible difference to their organisation.

Nominees must have less than five years' media business experience at the time of the entry deadline.

A shortlist of entrants will be interviewed by a panel of industry leaders.

26. INSPIRING INDIVIDUAL AWARD

In honour of Sandy Smith

Recognising those who uplift and inspire the industry through their dedication and spirit.

Every industry has those exceptional individuals—the ones who uplift, inspire, and drive meaningful change. The Inspiring Individual Award recognises those who go above and beyond in media, whether through mentorship, leadership, innovation, or dedication to the industry.

Know someone who deserves recognition? Nominate them today and help us celebrate their impact.

This category is free to enter.

Please note, nominations will be extended to recognise unsung heroes across both media agencies and media owner organisations in 2026.

BEST IN SHOW

All Gold Beacon Award winners will be eligible for the Best in Show. It is a category designed to identify the single best example of media brilliance across the entry period and will not necessarily be the entry that has won the most gold awards on the night. This award is selected by the panel of international judges.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

CATEGORY JUDGING

In the Category Judging, entries are judged within their entered category as a single cohort. Judges are placed into panels and assigned multiple categories. The first stage is completed online, followed by an in-person discussion.

Panels are built to ensure a balanced mix of skills, disciplines, and industry experience. Each group is led by an Executive Judge — senior client, agency, or media owner personnel — who moderates the session and guides consensus.

Judges for each category are selected from the nominations received. Every entry within a category is read by every judge on the panel, and scores are submitted individually. Any conflicts must be declared; judges with conflicts step out and do not participate in the discussion or scoring of those entries.

All final decisions are confirmed in the room during Category Judging, led by the Executive Judge and Convenor.

INTERNATIONAL JUDGING

The Best in Show and Media Agency of the Year awards are judged remotely by an international panel.

For Best in Show, the panel reviews all Gold-winning entries and, after discussion, selects the overall Best in Show.

For Media Agency of the Year, the judges score each submission, and an independent auditor reviews the financial section. These results are combined to confirm the final winner.

MEDIA COMMITTEE

The Comms Council Media Committee will choose the winner of both Emerging Talent categories, Media Business of the Year and Sales Team of the year.

POLICY & PERMISSIONS

PUBLISHING

Finalists and winners of 2026 Beacon Awards will be shared in various ways. Publication is at the discretion of the Comms Council, and will be governed by the principles of awards programmes being educational and inspiring of future best practice. Work submitted must be original and you must have secured rights to submit it.

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS AND CASE STUDIES

The campaign material you enter becomes the property of The Comms Council and will not be returned. Campaign materials submitted to the Beacon Awards includes all .jpg images, PDF images/slides, etc.

By entering your work in the Beacon Awards, the Comms Council are automatically granted the right to make copies, reproduce and display the campaign material and case summaries for education and publicity purposes such as, but not limited to the Comms Council website, press releases, newsletters, programming/conferences, and the Beacon Awards show.

PUBLICATION OF CASE STUDIES

We respect that entries may have information deemed confidential. Within the Entry Portal, you are asked to set the publishing permission for your written Entry. You must select one of the following options:

- Publish as the case was submitted. If you're a finalist or a winner, you agree that your Entry may be published by us as it was submitted and reproduced or displayed.
- Publish an edited version of the written case study. If you choose this option, you will be asked to submit an edited version of your case study for publication, which will be reproduced or displayed. In this case, you may redact confidential information, however you may not redact any section in its entirety, including results.

The spirit of this option is to enable entrants to mask, via indexing or redaction, only information that is deemed highly confidential and might provide active competitive advantage. However, any redactions should not impede the overall telling of the story, nor remove elements that would enable the reader to understand why the case study was awarded. Failure to upload a redacted version (if you have opted for this publication option) may result in disqualification from the awards.

It is our experience that most advertisers are pleased and flattered when asked if winning case studies can be made public in order to further inform the body of evidence and information on marketing communications effectiveness and return on investment.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

ENTRY

- 1.** The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- 2.** All judges must declare any conflict of interest with any entry and recuse themselves from judging that entry.
- 3.** The campaign must comply with all legal requirements. Non-complying campaigns will be ruled ineligible. Entries that have had a complaint upheld against them by the ASA will be ineligible unless the case study can demonstrate that any specific executions detailed in the upheld complaint had a minimal impact on results.
- 4.** The creation of campaigns and entries should be in line with all relevant and applicable advertising Codes and Regulations.
- 5.** Each entry must be for a bona fide client that has paid for media placement (or has detailed specific reasons for pro bono media support – e.g. Charity campaigns). Scam campaigns will not be eligible.
- 6.** Comms Council reserves the right to exclude any entry including for reasons that an entry does not comply with the above rules or guidelines.
- 7.** The campaign material, alongside the written entry, entered becomes the property of the Comms Council and will not be returned. By entering your work in the Beacon Awards, the Comms Council are automatically granted the right to make copies, reproduce and display the campaign material and the case summaries for education and publicity purposes such as, but not limited to the Comms Council website, press releases, newsletters, conferences, and the Beacon Awards show.
- 8.** The agency and the client warrant to Comms Council that neither the entry nor anything included in it or supplementary to it infringes the intellectual property rights of any third party, nor is it in any other way unlawful or injurious. The agency and client indemnify and hold harmless Comms Council on demand from and against any claim, damage, loss, cost, charge expense, outgoing or payment which the Comms Council pays, suffers, incurs or is liable for in respect of a breach of this warranty, whether arising before or after date of submission of the Case Study.
- 9.** Comms Council reserves the right to re-assign an entry into an alternative category if it deems it appropriate.