

Tips & Tricks:

AWARDS NOMINATION SUBMISSIONS



AWARDS PROCESS

Nominations are submitted to FHSA, where the Awards Committee reviews and scores each application using an award-specific rubric. Based on these scores, the committee selects one nominee to advance to the regional level. The state-level recipient is recognized at the FHSA Annual Conference.

FHSA then submits the selected nominee to Region IV Head Start (RIVHSA), where applications are reviewed and scored alongside nominees from other states in the region. Regional recipients are recognized at the RIVHSA Annual Conference.

Nominees who advance to the national level are submitted to the National Head Start Association (NHSA) for final consideration and are honored at the NHSA Annual Conference.

Three categories rotate eligible nominees each year:

- Administrator of the Year
- Staff of the Year
- Support Staff of the Year

PREPARATION TIPS

Start early to allow time to gather information and submit a thoughtful nomination.

- Confirm eligibility and review all application requirements.
- Assign a point person or small committee to manage the process and track deadlines.
- Create an internal timeline that falls ahead of the official submission schedule.
- Identify individuals who can provide strong, detailed letters of reference.
- Use simple collaboration tools such as Microsoft Forms or Google Forms to collect internal nominations.
- Set up shared folders to organize documents and allow multiple staff to contribute.
- Verify your program is in good standing and gather any required membership information in advance.
- Carefully review the award-specific checklist and ensure all materials are complete before submitting.

Staying organized reduces last-minute stress and results in a stronger, more competitive nomination.

BUILDING A STRONG SUBMISSION

Make it easy for reviewers to understand the nominee's impact. Strong nominations clearly show how the nominee made a difference for children, families, and their program.

Tell the Story of Impact

- Focus on how the nominee made a difference, not just what their job required.
- Describe actions they took, challenges they helped solve, and improvements made to services or program quality.
- Highlight partnerships, creative solutions, or new approaches they introduced.
- Explain who benefited and the lasting impact on children, families, or the community.

Use Specific, Meaningful Detail

- Stay within word limits, but provide enough information to clearly tell the story.
- Avoid brief or generic responses that only list facts or achievements.
- Be specific about actions and outcomes, and include context so reviewers understand why the work mattered.

Choose strong letters of reference:

- Review the award-specific requirements to ensure each letter meets eligibility criteria. Applications that do not include all required letters will not be considered.
- Select individuals who know the nominee well in different capacities, such as a supervisor, colleague, community partner, or personal reference.
- Ask letter writers to include specific examples that show the nominee's contributions and impact.
- Strong letters clearly explain why the nominee deserves recognition and demonstrate a genuine connection to their work.
- Generic letters or those that only restate job duties can weaken the overall application.