

Minnesota Association of



Government COMMUNICATORS

2012 NORTHERN LIGHTS CONTEST

WANTED: The BEST in Government Communications!

MAGC sponsors the Northern Lights Contest annually to recognize outstanding work in government communications. Last year, nearly 90 projects received awards. In addition to rewarding exemplary work in the public sector, the Northern Lights Awards Program provides valuable feedback from qualified judges who are communications professionals.

Eligibility

The Northern Lights competition is open to communicators in the public sector (including federal, state, regional, and local government agencies, non-profit agencies and school districts) and to producers in the private sector who have completed work for Minnesota non-profit or government communicators. Entries must have been produced in 2011. Entries released in 2012, but produced in 2011, are eligible.

Deadline for Entries – Postmarked no later than Friday, March 23, 2012

THREE copies of each award entry – including entry form, cover letter and project are required.

See following pages for forms and entry instructions. Please do not package any entries in three-ring binders. For photos, please do not mount any larger than 9x12”.

Mail entries to: Lynette Biunno, Northern Lights Awards, c/o City of Edina, 4801 W. 50th St., Edina, MN 55424. Be sure to include the required entry forms, cover letters, and contest fees as outlined on the following pages. Entries will **not** be returned.

Awards

- ◆ **Award of Excellence** – for entries of the highest quality that met or exceeded their intended results, taking into account constraints on time and money. These entries demonstrate creativity and wise use of resources.
- ◆ **Award of Merit** – for entries of high quality that are a credit to the organization for which they were created and which exhibit creativity and wise use of resources.
- ◆ **Best of Show** – for the one entry that best demonstrates effective government communications. This award will be chosen from Award of Excellence winners by the MAGC Board of Directors.

Judging

The judges are professionals in a field related to the category. Each entry is judged on its own merits. Multiple awards in a category are possible; judges likewise can recommend that no awards be given in the category they are judging. Judges may take into account the challenges of producing the entry, including:

- ◆ The amount of time available between idea and product
- ◆ Budget constraints
- ◆ Available staff time to carry out the project

Judges are asked to write comments about entries indicating areas of excellence and areas of suggested improvements. If judges determine that a contest entry has been submitted in the wrong category, they may move that entry into a more appropriate category, with the concurrence of the chief judge. Judges' decisions are final.

Photographs in Category 12a will be judged on technical merits and creativity only.

Awards Banquet

Award winning entries will be announced at the MAGC Northern Lights Banquet in May. Invitations and details will be sent a few weeks prior to the event. MAGC provides one plaque for award-winning entries; duplicate plaques are available to order after the banquet.

Questions?

About the Northern Lights Contest?

Contact Jennifer Bennerotte (jbennerotte@ci.edina.mn.us) or 952-833-9520.

About joining MAGC or your membership status?

Contact Sara Swenson (sswenson@dakotacda.state.mn.us) or 651-675-4434 or Jacque Larson (jl Larson@eminnetonka.com) or 952-939-8207.

NORTHERN LIGHTS CONTEST CATEGORIES

1. Promotional or Informational Brochures or Pamphlets

- a. 12 pages or fewer
- b. More than 12 pages

2. Visual Design

- a. Logos/Illustrations/Graphics
- b. Themes
- c. Posters/banners/billboards/ads
- d. Calendars
- e. Other

3. Periodical Printed Publication

Submit three consecutive issues published in 2011.

- a. For external audience
- b. For internal audience

4. Periodical Electronic Publication

Submit three consecutive issues published in 2011. Provide printed hard copy and a CD or disk with electronic version (PDF).

- a. For external audience
- b. For internal audience

5. Program or Activity Catalog

- a. Annual publication
- b. Monthly, bi-annual or quarterly publication

6. Writing

- a. News release
- b. News article (published)
- c. Feature article (published)
- d. Blog post
- e. Opinion piece, column, letter to editor, speech (published)

7. Video (send 3 copies of DVDs or website link with one DVD)

- a. Video news release
- b. Public service announcement
- c. Internal video
- d. News or talk show
- e. Informational or instructional video
- f. Promotional video

8. Public Information Projects

- a. News conference
- b. Media/press kit
- c. Special event
- d. Books

9. Annual Reports

10. Plans

- a. Marketing or advertising plan
- b. Crisis/risk communication plan
- c. Other

11. Websites (New site or significant design or content changes in 2011)

Please provide URL and screen print with entry. For entries of redesigns, please include a screenshot of previous site, feature or application.

- a. Overall website redesign
- b. New website feature or application

12. Use of Social Media

Please define the social media tool(s) used along with the URL(s) or screen shots.

- a. Promoting an event
- b. Communicating during an emergency or crises
- c. Communicating a specific issue
- d. Maintaining strong public relations

13. Photography

- a. Individual photograph -- Recognizes excellence in individual photographs, not publications. Submit a 5-by-7-inch or 8-by-10 print (digital print is acceptable) and proof of publication. If mounting photos, please make sure they're no larger than 9-by-12 inches.
- b. Use of photography – Recognizes excellence in use of photography in printed or electronic project.

14. Best for Least (There will be only one award given in this category.)

Tell us about the most creative project or activity you pulled off with the fewest dollars spent. Please provide the percentage of your department's annual budget used for this project.

NORTHERN LIGHTS ENTRY FORM

A copy of this form must accompany each entry. **THREE copies of each award entry** – including entry form, cover letter and project are required.

Entry Title: _____

Category: _____ Category Title: _____

Submitted By: _____

Agency/Jurisdiction: _____

Entry Cover Letter (maximum of two pages)

Entry cover letter is **required** for all categories **EXCEPT** Category 12a. The cover letter is worth a percentage of the total score for the entry. Attach a cover letter along with this entry form to each entry submitted in the Northern Lights Contest. Entries submitted without cover letters will be ineligible for an award; however, will be judged to provide feedback.

Cover letters must clearly describe the issue or goal, the problem-solving steps, and the degree of success of the chosen solution. Letters must also include the following components:

1. Problem/opportunity statement
2. Intended goals or outcomes
3. Documentation of achievement
4. Budget and use of resources (staff/consultant time used for this project)
5. Challenges you encountered

Award Information

Print or type the name(s) of individuals and/or organization **exactly as they should appear on the plaque for this entry** if it receives an award. MAGC is not responsible for replacing plaques if there are mistakes in the information provided. **Award information is limited to 75 characters with spaces.**

NORTHERN LIGHTS CONTEST FEE FORM

There is no limit on the number of entries. A check or purchase order number for all entries submitted **MUST BE INCLUDED**.

You must be a member of MAGC to qualify for the lower membership entry fee. If you are not a member of MAGC now, you are encouraged to join and take advantage of the discounted membership rates for all 2012 MAGC sponsored events and entry fees listed below.

Entries submitted by a group qualify for the membership rate if at least one person listed in the award information below is a member.

Current MAGC Members:

First entry is \$45 _____

Additional entries are \$30 each _____

Non-members:

First entry is \$60 _____

Additional entries: _____ x \$45 each = _____

I Want To Join MAGC Now! = \$60 _____
Membership runs through Dec. 31, 2012

Total Amount Enclosed _____

Submitted by _____

Agency/Jurisdiction _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail _____

Purchase order or check number _____

Checks should be made payable to MAGC.

(State vendor number: 0000202792)

To pay your entry fees with a credit/debit card visit www.MAGCOnline.org/awards