Welcome to the 2026 Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ Award Program

Since 2004, the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Award program has recognized the many ways that great culture builds great organizations.

The Canada's Most Admired submission guidelines for 2026 will allow nominated organizations to highlight not just what makes their culture unique, but also how culture has helped to shape organizational performance.

Qualifications

Only organizations that have been nominated to the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ program, and that have been notified of this nomination by Waterstone Human Capital, are eligible to make a submission. Organizations must fit into one of the following categories to qualify for the program:

- Emerging (revenues of $5 million to under $25 million, and over 25 employees)
- Growth (revenues of $25 million to under $100 million)
- Mid-Market (revenues of $100 million to under $500 million)
- Enterprise (revenues of $500 million and above), and
- Non-Profit and Broader Public Sector*

Winners of the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ Awards will be announced in November. Winning organizations must be present at the Awards Celebration to accept their award.**

Submission Portal

All submitting organizations will receive a confidential and secure link to the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ submission portal. Your written submission must be uploaded through the portal before the June deadline. No additional documentation will be permitted or available to be uploaded unless it is specifically asked for in the submission portal. Submissions for 2026 must be in the submission portal and locked by **Friday, June 26, 2026**.

Your Story

The Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ awards are about more than celebrating great corporate culture—they're about celebrating how corporate culture has helped your organization drive performance. Your submission should tell the story of what you're doing, why you're doing it, who's involved, and how you're measuring success. Submissions that include both qualitative storytelling and strong quantitative evidence tend to perform best. Metrics are expected throughout the submission where relevant.

Some things to consider:

- Provide a mix of qualitative and quantitative examples for the strongest submission.
- Give context—not just what you are/aren't doing, but why it matters/sets you apart.
- Tell a story—include people, show growth or planning where you can, give examples and metrics, celebrate successes.
- Don't try and tell everything—give an overview and a few strong examples with measurable impact to support your case in each section.
- Be sure to include all required performance metrics. Submissions that do not include these metrics may be disqualified.
- Use the full word count in each section.

Questions?

We're here to help! Waterstone shares a submission writing webinar with all nominated organizations each Spring—watch your email. You can also reach out to info@waterstonehc.com with any questions.

Note: While Waterstone administers this program, we do not participate in/have influence over the voting process or the selection of the award winners.

The 2026 Submission Guideline

When your culture is aligned with your strategy, and your team is aligned with your culture, you see enormous engagement and exceptional results!

Unless otherwise indicated, this guideline applies to submissions for all award categories. Your submission must be in the submission portal and locked by **Friday, June 26, 2026**. You will have a chance to edit the submission following your submission interview.

Part 1: Introduction

You have **250 words** to describe your organization and what your organization does. (Answer: Who? What? Where? When? and Why?) We also recommend using this space to clearly define your culture and outline what high performance means at your organization.

Part 2: Key Performance Areas

There are seven key performance areas included in the 2026 written submission. You have a **maximum of 500 words per section** to tell your story as it relates to each performance area.

Important note: graphics, tables, multi-media, and other attachments are not allowed unless otherwise noted. You can include links; however, we recommend that you use them sparingly and to enhance your story rather than to introduce new/core information. Please do not embed links—include the full URL.

1. Vision and Leadership

This section should tell the story of the organization's purpose, mission, and vision, explore the role that leadership plays in building and sustaining a strong culture, and talk about how culture is communicated within your organization. Some areas that you may want to touch on include:

- The purpose, mission, vision, and values of the organization.
- The role of leaders in setting, maintaining, and transforming culture.
- How leaders set the tone for strong, open communication.
- How leaders drive/communicate the cultural pillars throughout the organization.
- The role that leaders play in guiding/inspiring people across the organization.
- How leadership inspires people toward a new level of growth and achievement.
- Key methods of communication/listening used to support culture throughout the organization.
- Supporting metrics such as eNPS and retention rate.

In addition, for Non-Profit and Broader Public Sector submissions:

- How are Directors chosen?
- What is the length of their terms?
- How are Directors engaged in/with the culture of the organization?

2. Recruitment and Hiring for Culture Add

This section should tell the story of how your organization finds talent, and the best practices, strategies, processes, tools, and services you use to recruit, hire, and onboard team members who not only fit your current culture but also add to it for future growth and success. Some areas that you may want to touch on include:

- Your recruitment process and how it contributes to culture add.
- The role of culture in your recruitment strategy.
- The key behaviours or values that you assess for in the recruitment process.
- What strategies and tools have been a success and why.
- How you measure your success in recruitment and talent acquisition.
- How you communicate culture as part of your employment brand and how you leverage culture during onboarding.
- Supporting metrics such as time to hire, retention rate of new hires, and employee feedback on onboarding.

3. People Development and Talent Management

This section should tell the story of how you develop, support, retain, and celebrate your people, your culture, and your successes. Some areas that you may want to touch on include:

- The role that learning, training, and development play in your culture and how you support the development of your people—personally and professionally.
- How you identify and support team members to grow within the organization.
- Your voluntary turnover rate (remember to provide context).
- How you celebrate successes and recognize the efforts of your team/the achievements of your organization.
- Details of your total rewards and recognition programs and how these serve as a competitive advantage for your organization.
- Supporting metrics such as professional development dollars and paid time off provided and used by employees, and investments in recognizing and celebrating successes.

4. Cultural Alignment and Measurement

This section should tell the story of how your organization sustains its culture and should focus on the 'what', 'why', 'when', and 'how' of employee engagement and culture measurement. Some areas that you may want to touch on include:

- How you ensure that your culture is aligned to your vision/purpose, people, and processes.
- How you ensure that your culture is helping to drive performance.
- How and when you measure and assess your culture, and how you act on feedback.
- How and when you measure employee engagement and how you act on feedback.
- Key metrics from any recent surveys or polls related to culture or engagement (e.g., eNPS and response rate), how that data compares to past surveys, and how you leverage the data to help drive culture and performance.

5. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)

This section should tell the story of how your organization approaches DEIB and the policies and processes you have in place that support and showcase your commitment. Some areas that you may want to touch on include:

- How do you demonstrate DEIB in the workplace and at the leadership/senior leadership level?
- How do you connect DEIB back to your purpose and culture?
- The role of DEIB in your recruitment efforts.
- What programs or tools do you use to mitigate unconscious bias in hiring and promoting talent?
- How have your DEIB programs evolved over the past number of years?
- What metrics do you use to better understand and prioritize DEIB?
- Supporting metrics for DEIB programs/initiatives and their impact

6. Corporate Social Responsibility

This section should tell the story of how your organization and your individual team members are supporting your communities and broader social/environmental/economic issues. Some areas that you may want to touch on include:

- What programs do you support and how?
- How do you choose the programs and causes you support and how do they connect back to your purpose and culture?
- Who is involved in your programs and how do they get involved?
- How engaged your team members are in your efforts (e.g., provide metrics like participation numbers, campaign results, and percentage usage of volunteer days if applicable).
- Which of your programs are organization-led and which are employee-driven.
- If you don't yet have a well-developed program, describe your plan and timeline for future programs.
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) data (if you report against these criteria).

7. Organizational Performance

This section should tell the story and showcase the link between culture and organizational performance. Please note that **performance data is a requirement**; submissions that do not include any financial indicators may be disqualified.

Required information:
Emerging, Growth, Mid-Market, and Enterprise submissions:

- At least three of the following financial indicators for your Canadian operations***:
    - Annual revenue from your most recent fiscal year
    - EBITDA
    - Three-year EBITDA growth (percentages are acceptable)
    - Three-year revenue growth (percentages are acceptable)
    - Industry-relevant data (e.g., market share, industry or network comparable markers, share of North American or global operations, etc.)

Non-Profit and Broader Public Sector Submissions:

- The following operational indicators***:
    - Funding sources (by type) and the relevant percentages of total revenue.
    - Your fundraising ratio (if applicable).

Some additional areas that you may want to touch on include:

- What metrics, beyond financial, you use to determine success.
- What performance means to your organization and how your definition of performance has evolved.
- How your culture has influenced performance.
- How you have leveraged the efforts of your team to help drive success.
- How the organization has performed relative to its purpose, mission, vision and goals.
- How your performance compares to others in the sector/industry.
- Context around your financial reporting.

*Eligibility in the Non-Profit and Broader Public Sector category is defined as an organization that fits one (or more) of the following descriptions—charity, foundation, association, public hospital, public education institutions, cities/municipalities, organizations whose funding primarily comes from government.

**Winning organizations are required to have representatives at the Awards Celebration to accept their award. Individual and team tickets will be available for purchase beginning December 2026.

***Organizational performance data can be included in the body of your response or included as a PDF attachment. Note that attachments must be no longer than two pages and must be related to organizational performance data only. Waterstone Human Capital can provide a template attachment on request. Attachments that do not include performance data will be deleted before the submission goes to the Board of Governors; attachments that are longer than two pages will be edited and only the first two pages will be sent to the Board of Governors.