

# Policies and Guide to Establishing, Modifying, or Discontinuing an ACM Award

Version of October 19, 2023

## Definitions

1. ACM **awards** fit into one of the following categories:
  - **Merit** (contribution, achievement, or innovation): for single or cumulative technical contributions to a discipline
  - **Service**: for service to the award's sponsor and/or to a community
  - **Paper**: for an outstanding paper, possibly with author restrictions (e.g., students or teams), given at a technical meeting or suite of meetings or published in a journal or other form, possibly over some period of time. For information on the "Publications Board Guidelines for Establishing a Best Paper Award for ACM Periodicals" see: <http://www.acm.org/publications/guidelines-best-paper-award>.
2. A **prize (contest or competition)** is a form of award which allows self-nomination and for which the selection criteria imply a contest of some form with selection criteria that may go beyond merit.
3. A **grant** is a form of award which provides for the reimbursement of expenses to conduct research, attend technical meetings, etc. and for which the selection criteria may include factors other than merit or service (e.g., financial need or gender).
4. An award is **jointly sponsored** if it involves a sponsor organization other than ACM or its sub-units.
5. An award is **named** if its title includes the name of a real person, living or deceased.
6. An award is **endowed** if there is a designated fund balance whose earnings are used to fund the ongoing expenses of the award (e.g., honorarium and administrative costs).
7. The **SGB Awards Committee** consists of five ACM Members, one of whom is the SIG Awards Advisor who serves as the chair of the committee. (Details of the composition and operation of the committee appear in the section "Details Regarding the SGB Awards Committee", below.)
8. The **ACM Awards Committee** consists of the ACM President and CEO/Executive Director (ex-officio positions), the ACM Awards Chair, the chairs of the individual ACM award selection committees, and the SIG Awards Advisor.

## Process for Proposing a New Award

1. Each proposal for a new ACM award must have a sponsoring ACM unit (typically a SIG or SIGs or, for Association-wide awards, ACM Council). Proposals for a new SIG-sponsored award should be sent to the SGB Awards Committee ([sig-awardscommittee@acm.org](mailto:sig-awardscommittee@acm.org)). An award proposed by any other sponsoring unit should be sent to the ACM Awards Committee ([acm-awards@acm.org](mailto:acm-awards@acm.org)).
2. This section describes the general process for proposing an award. Most categories of award impose additional requirements; see the subsequent sections for details.
3. Proposals are typically 2-4 pages in length and must include the following elements. (For an award proposed by a SIG, a [template](#) that encompasses the elements below must be used.)
  - Proposed name of the award
  - Sponsoring ACM unit(s)
  - Rationale explaining the intent of the award and why it is appropriate for ACM
    - If the intent has potential overlap with other ACM awards, address why the new award is desirable.
  - Description of the award process:
    - How nominations will be solicited
    - Eligibility criteria: the proposers should be sensitive to language that could be interpreted as overly rigid (e.g., we recommend avoiding physical age restrictions and referring to time-in-career or time-since-last-degree instead).

- Type of nomination and endorsements to be requested
  - Suggested size and makeup of committee (must be a dedicated award committee, not a governing committee from the sponsoring subunit)
  - How committee members will be selected and how the committee will be overseen (e.g., an Association-wide award normally has a selection committees overseen by the ACM Awards Committee, a SIG award's selection committee is normally overseen by the SGB, and paper awards are normally selected by the applicable conference program committee)
  - Evaluation criteria to be used in selecting award winners
  - Timing and presentation
    - Indicate how often the award will be given (typical frequency is annual, but biennial is also acceptable).
    - Where and by whom the award will be presented
    - If an award lecture is to be included, what the venue will be or how the selection of a venue will be made.
  - Form of the award
    - What the awardee will receive (e.g., framed certificate, plaque, gift) and how the associated cost will be covered
    - If the award includes a cash prize, include a plan for securing the award's financial viability (this is normally done through an endowment; see the section "Endowed Awards", below).
    - If the award includes travel reimbursement or a special ceremony, describe how the endowment and/or sponsoring unit will budget for the expense.
4. All ACM awards must conform to the [ACM Policy and Procedures for Conferring Honors](#).
  5. All SIG-sponsored Award proposals must be submitted to the SGB Awards Committee which, after reviewing and, if necessary, revising the proposal with the proposers, forwards it to the ACM Awards Committee for approval. (Exception: unnamed "Best Paper" awards require only SGB Awards Committee endorsement, not ACM Awards Committee approval.) All ACM awards other than SIG awards are submitted to the ACM Awards Committee for approval.
  6. ACM-wide awards, named awards, and jointly sponsored awards must also be approved by ACM Council.

## Service Awards

The ACM Recognition of Service certificate program is available to all ACM subunits for their use in recognizing contributions to professional service in their areas (e.g., conference leadership, subunit leadership, or newsletter editorship).

ACM subunits are encouraged to develop and to maintain award programs to recognize significant and long-term contributions to professional volunteerism within the area of their subunits. In addition to their own service awards, subunits are encouraged to nominate candidates to the Association-wide service awards (e.g., Outstanding Contribution to ACM and Distinguished Service).

The above section "Process for Proposing a New Award" applies to service awards. The ACM Awards Committee (and, if appropriate, the SGB Awards Committee) will give pro forma approval to subunit service awards, provided they:

- have a written nomination and selection process,
- are given at regular intervals to moderate numbers of volunteers, and
- limit honoraria to no more than \$1,000.

## Paper Awards

For general information on the "Publications Board Guidelines for Establishing a Best Paper Award for ACM Periodicals" see: <http://www.acm.org/publications/guidelines-best-paper-award>.

ACM subunits that publish technical papers (e.g., SIG conferences) are encouraged to develop and maintain "best paper" awards. In addition to their subunit paper awards, subunits are encouraged to submit their best technical papers for publications in other Association venues, where appropriate.

The SGB Awards Committee will give pro forma approval to best paper awards, provided they:

- have a written selection process,
- are administered by the appropriate technical committee (typically the conference's program committee), and
- include honoraria not exceeding US\$1,000.

## Jointly Sponsored Awards

ACM awards may be jointly sponsored with appropriate non-ACM organizations. In this case, the proposal must also specify how fiscal and other responsibilities will be shared by the sponsors. In addition to the requirements of the above section "Process for Proposing a New Award", the following provisions apply to jointly sponsored awards:

1. The nomination and selection process, as well as the administrative terms, of jointly sponsored awards must carefully delineate the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of each sponsor.
2. Arrangements for financing, committee appointments, venue of presentation, and staff responsibility must be specified.
3. Joint sponsorship with for-profit organizations requires additional justification for approval.
4. All jointly sponsored awards must be approved by the ACM Council.

## Endowed Awards

In addition to the requirements of the above section "Process for Proposing a New Award", the following apply to endowed awards:

1. A proposal for a new endowed award must include a plan to fully endow the award within five years of the award's establishment.
2. To be fully endowed, an award's fund balance normally should be at least 15 times, and preferably 20 times, the annual ongoing expense of the award.
3. The costs of travel reimbursement, memorabilia, and/or administration normally should be included in the endowment calculation.
4. There should be no expectation that individual donors will become members of the award's selection committee.
5. Donors should be advised that their contributions will be applied toward the designated award on a "best efforts" basis. If an award is under-endowed after it has been given five times, the ACM Awards Committee may remove the "endowed" designation from the award and/or discontinue the award:
  - Should an award become under-endowed, the originally sponsoring ACM subunit is responsible for developing and initiating a plan to fully endow the award.
  - If the award continues to be under-endowed, contributions to an endowment may be applied to the ongoing expenses of the award.
6. Subunit endowment contributions may include explicit instructions for disposition of the contribution upon under-endowment and/or discontinuation of the award (e.g., return of the remaining fund balance to the subunit or redirection of the balance to another award's endowment). These instructions will be honored in good faith where possible.

## Named Awards

ACM named awards/prizes/grants convey special distinction and require additional justification for approval. Both the merit of the award in the ACM context and the appropriateness of the proposed name will be

scrutinized. In addition to the requirements of the above section “Process for Proposing a New Award”, the following apply to named awards:

1. It is desirable that the person(s) for whom the award is named be widely recognized in the area in which the award is given. In this context, Association-wide awards imply a wider scope of recognition than sub-unit awards. The burden of persuasion for names of less-recognized persons will be on the nominators.
2. The proposal for a named award should include the elements described earlier (see Proposing a New Award), with the following additional requirements:
  - The rationale should be a 500-word statement from the nominator describing the purpose and value of the award and the appropriateness of the name.
  - Letters must be provided from at least 5 professional ACM members endorsing the award and commenting on its value to ACM and the appropriateness of the name.
  - A statement of permission for the use of the name from the person(s) named (if living) or their estate(s) must be included.
3. Named awards normally are endowed, but the merit of the award must stand independently of the proposed funding.
4. The name must pose no legal or ethical problems.
5. Persons who are active as volunteers or staff may not be considered as names for awards while they are still active.
6. To provide an opportunity for full discussion of each proposal for a named award, the decision is normally restricted to face-to-face meetings of the ACM Award Committee, and subsequently the ACM Council. This can add significantly to the timeline for approval. Discussions and voting will take place in closed sessions.

## Process for Modifying an Existing Award

When an ACM unit sponsoring an award deems that a modification is desirable, it prepares a revised award proposal of the same form used to establish an award (as described above) and submits it to the relevant committee (SGB Awards Committee or ACM Awards Committee) . In the case of a SIG award, the same template should be used, ideally indicating clearly what text is being changed. The revised proposal should be submitted for approval as if it were a new proposal. Additionally:

1. The proposal should be accompanied by a statement explaining why the modification is desirable.
2. For SIG awards, the SGB Awards Committee may, at its discretion, consider the submission sooner than its schedule for new awards (see the section “Details Regarding the SGB Awards Committee”) would imply.

## Process for Discontinuing an Award

When an ACM unit sponsoring an award deems that the award should be discontinued, it prepares an explanation of the reason to discontinue the award and submits it to the relevant committee (SGB Awards Committee or ACM Awards Committee). That committee may seek further information before granting approval.

The ACM Awards Committee (or, for SIG Awards, the SGB Award Committee) may initiate this process if it believes an award is no longer viable.

Discontinuing an award whose creation required the approval of ACM Council must also be approved by ACM Council.

In the case of discontinuing an endowed award, the endowment may be redirected to another award's endowment. Donors should not expect that their contributions will be returned if the award is under-endowed and/or discontinued.

# Details Regarding the SGB Awards Committee

## Composition

The SGB Awards Committee consists of five ACM Members serving concurrent two-year terms that end on June 30 of an even-numbered year. The SIG Awards Advisor is the chair of the SGB Awards Committee.

The chair of the SGB Awards Committee Chair nominates three other members for approval by the SGB Executive Committee. The fifth member is the past SGB Awards Committee Chair.

The consideration of nominees for membership of the SGB Awards Committee should be done as soon as possible after July 1 of even-numbered years. The consideration of nominees should have preference for individuals with multiple years of ACM, SGB, and SIG experience, and it should have preference for getting representatives from SIGs of varying sizes. Additionally, the consideration of nominees should have preference for individuals with experience on awards committees, particularly awards committees of individual SIGs. Reappointment of at least one member (other than the past SGB Awards Committee Chair) is encouraged.

The ACM Director of SIG Services is an advisor to the SGB Awards Committee.

## Purpose and Operation

The SGB Awards Committee has two chief functions:

- It reviews and endorses proposals to create, modify, or discontinue awards as described in earlier sections of this document. Integral to this function, the committee interacts with proposers to ensure that proposals meet the specified requirements and ACM policies.
- It conducts a periodic review of SIG awards as part of the overall periodic review of a SIG's program. This review is intended to ensure compliance with ACM Awards policies and to address any deficiencies.

Proposals from the SIGs are considered on three annual cycles with submission deadline dates of March 15, September 15, and December 15. The committee intends its initial response to a proposer to occur within a month of the submission deadline, which may be a request for further information or modification of the proposal.

Upon completion of its review of an award proposal, the SGB Awards Committee forwards the proposal with its endorsement to the ACM Awards Committee for it to approve. (As noted above, "best paper" proposals can be approved directly by the SGB Awards Committee.) In most cases, approval by the ACM Awards Committee can be completed swiftly.

When reviewing a SIG's award portfolio as part of the SGB's periodic review of a SIG, the SGB Awards Committee receives from the SIG links to the relevant web pages and a statement that its award processes work as described. The SIG also provides a note about any awards that are inactive and should be discontinued (or a note that says that no such awards exist). Before endorsing the SIG's award program, the SGB Awards Committee will determine whether the program complies with ACM Awards policies and conforms to the SIG award template, including:

- Does each SIG award have an awards committee? How is it populated?
- How is the award determined and managed?
- What are the criteria for the award?
- Is there an open call for nominations?
- Does the award have a conflict-of-interest policy in place?