



# How to Write a Compelling Nomination

## Who deserves an honour or an award?

Saskatchewan's medal and recognition programs celebrate the people who make our province a better place to live.

The programs acknowledge outstanding achievements in education, health care, business, science and technology, volunteer and community service, the arts, and many other fields.

**There are always fewer honours and awards than people who deserve them.** Because receiving honours and awards are so rare, they are reserved for people:

- who have achieved excellence in their field and/or made significant, observable changes or accomplishments; and
- whose work has benefited the people of Saskatchewan or anywhere in the world in their field or activity.

If you think your nominee demonstrates these criteria and that their contribution stands out from other people's, please consider nominating them for one of our honours or awards programs.

## How do I write a compelling nomination?

In order for your nomination to stand out amongst the many others we receive, you must explain and include evidence and clear examples of what makes your nominee so exceptional.

## Don't just say your nominee is outstanding – prove it!

It's important to use specific and concrete examples to illustrate how your nominee meets each of the eligibility and award criteria. Provide examples of how your nominee has demonstrated outstanding character and is a deserving candidate for the honour or award.

Show how they have:

- encouraged and exemplified the virtue of good citizenship;
- touched or enriched the lives of others, particularly those who are vulnerable or less able to help themselves;
- shown ongoing initiative, leadership and dedication;

- devoted themselves to sustained and selfless voluntary service;
- earned the respect of their peers and become a role model in their field; and
- demonstrated innovation or creativity in delivering lasting results.

A compelling nomination should also describe as vividly and precisely as possible the difference your nominee's contribution has made and show why it has been important. Include details such as:

- how were things before the achievement;
- what knowledge your nominee had of the situation and what actions they choose to take;
- the scale of the achievement and whether it is completed or ongoing;
- the achievement's sustainability and impact on the community or province and how it has enriched the lives of others;
- what made this an outstanding achievement – indicate any extraordinary circumstances or challenges the nominee faced (include statistics or historical background if applicable); and
- what makes your nominee different from others doing the same thing?

Here is a sample that illustrates how a nominee has demonstrated outstanding character and meets many of the criteria mentioned above:

“He has made a measurable impact over the past 10 years as a passionate advocate for all those afflicted with cancer, especially residents of Saskatchewan. His volunteer activities are as varied as his skills, and they include: working with new patients to help them understand and overcome the fear of their diagnoses; assisting new patients with understanding the administrative nuances of the medical system in Saskatchewan; public speaking about the benefits of cancer research in Saskatchewan; and simply acting like a friend to those who are most in need of one... He has also directly and personally raised more than \$250,000 for cancer research as a participant in an annual cycling event. He has also frequently been asked to speak at presentations to the Saskatoon business community as well as to appear as the subject of a variety of media-related fundraising material – each of which has encouraged thousands and thousands of other financial contributions to cancer research in Saskatchewan... His contribution to others becomes all the more impressive when you consider the many personal health challenges that he himself has endured over the years.”

It is achievements and effects of this kind and scale that deserve an honour or award and that will convince a selection committee to consider your nominee.

**Give different perspectives - don't tell the same story three times!**

In addition to the description of the achievement, we also require testimonial letters from between three and six individuals (other than the nominator) who support the nomination. These testimonial letters are an integral part of the nomination process, since they help to paint a complete picture of your nominee and what they have accomplished.

The testimonial letters should:

- be written by individuals who know the nominee well enough to be able to talk about the impact of their achievement from first-hand experience;
- be current and written specifically for the honour or award you are nominating for; and
- provide various examples from a range of views and perspectives.

The testimonial letters should not:

- simply state that the authors' support the nomination – they need to provide more information about the nominee and their achievement.

Here is an example from three letters written about the same nominee, each from a different perspective:

“I was quite impressed by her maturity and dedication at the tender age of eleven. She is now 17, still visits us on a regular basis and has [organized] numerous fundraising events for the CNIB on behalf of our daughter.” – Parent

“I have never, in 36 years of teaching, encountered a young person so prepared to immediately assume a leadership role when a need arises.” – Teacher

“She has truly inspired me to become more involved in the community, reach out to those who are not as privileged as ourselves, and share our talents with those around us in order to make a positive change in our community and our world. I am merely one of the many lives that she has influenced throughout her daily life.” – Fellow Student and Friend

Note: It is often perceived that a testimonial letter written by an influential or high-profile individual will automatically give it more weight; however, this is not the case if the letter does not specifically address the nominee's merits.

**Keep it simple.**

Remember that longer doesn't necessarily mean better. When presenting your nominee, keep your explanations clear and to the point while ensuring there is enough information for the selection committee to make their decision.

How do I find the right words to present my nominee?

Strong nominations will often include persuasive nouns such as:

- |                 |                  |                |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| • determination | • commitment     | • respect      |
| • drive         | • sustainability | • recognition  |
| • innovation    | • creativity     | • selflessness |
| • impact        | • mentor         | • performance  |
| • visionary     | • teamwork       | • leadership   |
| • pioneer       | • hidden hero    | • role model   |

adjectives such as:

- trusted
- dedicated
- persuasive
- resourceful
- persevering
- unflustered
- positive
- generous
- inspirational
- passionate
- enthusiastic
- sympathetic
- supportive
- articulate
- conscientious
- incomparable
- exemplary
- fair
- admired
- vibrant
- diligent

and phrases such as:

- making a difference
- succeeding against the odds
- going over and above
- mentor and role model
- overcoming obstacles.

### **What shouldn't I do?**

Selection committees evaluate nominees' merits based on the information provided to them. That is why only the strongest and most compelling nominations often result in an honour or an award.

There must be enough convincing information in the nomination package to make a good case. Therefore, your nomination should not be simply:

- an extended CV or resume;
- a list of educational achievements or transcripts;
- a list of appointments, awards or posts; nor
- a job description showing what the person has been hired to do.

Because weaker nominations often only list these things, a regular complaint from selection panels is that the nominee was "simply doing their job" or "nothing exceptional was demonstrated".

Instead, you should describe what is outstanding about your nominee's achievements and show memorably and persuasively how and where they have made a difference.

### **Ready to nominate?**

We hope that you have found this guide useful. If you are now ready to nominate someone:

- [Visit our website](#) and click on the program you are interested in.

You then have two options:

**Option 1 – Offline Nomination**

- Download the appropriate nomination form for that program.
- Read the eligibility criteria and instructions carefully.
- Prepare in advance and give yourself (and your testimonial letter writers) lots of time to complete the nomination package before the deadline.
- Fill out the form and gather your testimonial letters as well as any additional materials, if applicable.
- Submit your nomination package before the deadline. Instructions for submitting your nomination email or by post can be found on the website.

**Option 2 – Online Nomination**

- Read the eligibility criteria and instructions carefully.
- Prepare in advance by understanding what you wish to write about your nominee. Also have at the ready your testimonials from three to six references.
- Click the “nominate now” button on the webpage.
- Fill out all applicable spaces in the online form, and upload your documents.
- Click submit. You will receive an initial confirmation email from the online system, and another personal acknowledgement from the Honours Secretariat once the nomination has been reviewed by a Protocol Officer.
- Remember that nominations are accepted all year, so if you miss the current deadline, eligible nominations will be considered in the following year.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions or require additional information, please [visit our website](#) or contact us:

Saskatchewan Honours and Awards Secretariat  
3085 Albert Street  
REGINA SK S4S 0B1

Email: [honours@gov.sk.ca](mailto:honours@gov.sk.ca)  
Phone: 306-787-8965