



Acclaim Awards - 2026

Terms of Reference

Award Categories

When submitting a nomination, consider the nominee's full range of accomplishments but choose the category that best reflects the heart of their story. Many nominees qualify in more than one category so please select the one that most closely aligns with their primary achievement. This ensures their nomination is evaluated in the most meaningful context possible.

For example, a 30-year-old graduate who launched a successful tech startup, volunteers as a mentor, and developed an app improving access to community services could make a compelling case in several categories, but their nomination would shine brightest under the Young Alumni Award, which recognizes extraordinary impact early in a career.

Distinguished Alumni Award

Think of this category as a lifetime achievement award. This category honours alumni whose professional accomplishments or service to their community and society are truly outstanding. Think of leaders whose work has shaped their field, inspired others, or made a significant contribution over time, whether through career success, mentorship, or community leadership.

Young Alumni Award

Think of this category as a rising star award. This award recognizes recent graduates (35 years old or younger) who have already made notable achievements in their profession or community. If your nominee has rapidly excelled in their career, demonstrated leadership, or made an impact early in their post-graduation journey, this category highlights emerging talent and promise.

Community Service Award

Think of this category as a volunteer of the year award. The focus here is on service and volunteer impact. Nominate an alum who has given back through sustained volunteer work, community leadership, advocacy, or initiatives that strengthen and uplift communities. This category is about heart, commitment, and positive change at the grassroots level.

Innovation Award

Think of this category as a bright idea award, recognizing the breakthrough, game-changing, lightbulb moment that turned creativity into meaningful impact. This category celebrates alumni (or collaborative teams that include at least one CNA alumnus) who have driven meaningful change through innovative ideas, products, services, or solutions. If your nominee has launched a novel initiative, transformed an industry practice, or created something that advances their profession or community in a creative way, this is the category for them.

Eligibility

- Candidates must be a graduate of a certificate, diploma or degree program at College of the North Atlantic (NL locations) prior to December 2025.
- Applicants are advised to refer to specific criteria pertaining to each application.
- Current College of the North Atlantic employees, board members, and members of the Alumni Acclaim Awards committee are not eligible for consideration.

Applicant/Nominator Check List

- Submit completed award application. Applications are available online at: www.cna.nl.ca/alumniawards
- Please provide two letters of reference that reflect a broad range of your skills and experiences. We encourage submitting one professional reference and one volunteer/community reference.
- Applicant/nominator should provide as much quality information as possible specific to the applicable award.

Optional:

- Nominees are encouraged to include media sources to strengthen their applications. After submitting the online application, Applicant/nominator will be prompted to upload media files with instructions once they complete online application.

Conditions of Application

- Applicants must be in good standing in the community and must not have engaged in activities that could bring any dishonour to College of the North Atlantic.
- Nominations must be submitted according to the guidelines presented in that year.
- Awards are open to all College of the North Atlantic Alumni that meet the criteria set for each award. The opportunity is available to apply for more than one award, however successful applicants cannot receive more than one award per year.
- Alumni nominated for an Acclaim Award in a previous year, whether through self-nomination or by a nominator, may reapply by resubmitting their previous application or submitting an updated version.
- Successful applicants may only receive an award from each category once in a five-year period.
- Nominations can be made by College of the North Atlantic, staff, faculty, students, or a member of the public. Members of CNA Foundation, including Advancement and Alumni staff, as well as members of the Acclaim Awards Committee, are not eligible to submit nominations.

- Applications must be completed and supported by two references (one professional reference and one volunteer/community involvement).
- The nominator can provide one of the reference letters. (max. one page per letter)
- Application time frame and deadline will be established and posted annually on the College of the North Atlantic website at www.cna.nl.ca/alumniawards
- Applications must be sent electronically to: alumniawards@cna.nl.ca
- Nominations received after the closing date will not be accepted.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Nominations in the Community Service category must highlight an applicant's volunteer, charitable and non-paid community services and experiences beyond one's paid service. If an applicant's submission is unclear representation between what is paid versus unpaid community service, the nomination may be disqualified.
- All nominators (and applicants through the nomination submission process) must affirm the information included in their submission is accurate and truthful. If any information presented is found to be inaccurate, whether by accident or purposefully, College of the North Atlantic reserves the right to remove the submission from consideration for that year and rescind the award if discovered after the fact.
- All nominations and supporting documents are considered confidential.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

- College of the North Atlantic is committed to providing an inclusive environment which celebrates and encourages diversity. CNA promotes equal access and opportunities to facilitate success in the educational community and in the community at large.
- The CNA Alumni Office is committed to accessibility. If you require any assistance while completing this application, please contact alumniawards@cna.nl.ca

Selection Committee

- The Selection Committee will consist of one College of the North Atlantic Executive member, one College of the North Atlantic senior leader and at least three external stakeholders. The Selection Committee will make their recommendations and reach final approval by a majority vote. All nominations will be confidential. The Alumni Office will confirm applicant's acceptance of award prior to contacting all other nominators of the result.
- The Selection Committee can serve for up to five years in total (not necessarily consecutively) to maintain a healthy turnover.
- Applications will be reviewed by the Alumni Office prior to being submitted to the Selection Committee to ensure all applications meet the conditions of application.
- All Selection Committee members will be required to sign a Conflict-of-Interest Form. This form will have members agree to abstain from any discussions, decisions, debate or votes concerning any application(s) that forms the subject of a conflict of interest.

- All new Selection Committee members will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement provided by the Alumni Office.

Scoring Process

- Selection Committee Members will review all submissions independently and score each application on each criterion on the scale provided in advance of the first initial meeting.
- The committee will rank their top five applications in each award category – for a total of 20 nominees. This will form the shortlist from each committee member.
- The shortlisted nominations for each category will then be reviewed and ranked again by each member of the Selection Committee at a meeting.
- The Selection Committee will make the recommendations and reach final approval by a majority vote.
- The Selection Committee will identify two alternative award recipients in each category. These applications will only be considered if selected recipient is unable to attend the awards event, wishes to not participate in advertising and promotions of the awards program, or declines to accept the award.
- The Selection Committee reserves the right to reassign an applicant to another award category if the committee feels they are better suited for another category based on the information in the award submission.

Notification

The Manager of Alumni will be responsible for contacting the award recipients and inviting them to accept their award on behalf of the Alumni Office. It is essential that selected applicant attend the awards event and participate in recognition opportunities as determined by the Alumni Office.

The notification process will include the following:

- Informing the recipient of their award by email and/or phone.
- The specifics of the publicity and recognition opportunities, the date, time and requirement to attend the awards event (in-person) to receive their award (if known at the time of notification), and their main contact from the Alumni Office going forward.

Conditions of Acceptance of Award

- The recipient understands the condition of being selected for that year is contingent upon them participating in publicity efforts surrounding the awards, which will include attending the awards event (in person), social media posts and advertising, and news media. If the potential recipient cannot commit to the above criteria, if they cannot attend the awards event, the applicant that was ranked in second place as an alternative will be selected as the recipient in that award category for that year.

In the rare cases of documented travel, illness, weather or other outstanding circumstances, the alumni office will work with the recipient to create a virtual pathway for them to attend the event.

- For recipients living outside of St. John's, NL, travel and accommodations expenses to participate at the in-person awards event will be considered by the Alumni Office. Recipients may be asked to provide documentation to receive support.

Award Presentation

The Acclaim Awards will be presented at the College of the North Atlantic Alumni Acclaim Awards Event in November 2026.