

Entering the 2026 APCO Awards

Everything you need to know before entering a submission.

APCO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the APCO Awards judging process takes place, as well as to the people of the Dharug Nation and the Burramattagal clan, the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which this event is held. We pay respect to Elders past and present.

Welcome!

The biennial APCO Awards recognise organisations delivering real-world circular packaging outcomes, with positive economic and environmental consequences. As Australia advances towards the National Packaging Targets, the Awards highlight leadership across the full packaging system — from design and material choices through to recovery, reuse, transparency and behaviour change.

This year's Awards will recognise organisations delivering measurable, credible circular packaging outcomes aligned to APCO's 2030 Strategic Plan. Judges independently assess every entry, and the process is designed to be fair, transparent and evidence-based.

2026 key dates

Submission entries open
Mon, 28 September

Submission entries close
Wed, 4 November

Finalist contacted and announced
Mon, 16 November

Awards ceremony
Tue, 1 December, 5:00pm

Why enter?

By entering, your organisation gains unique opportunities to:

- Demonstrate measurable progress against APCO's 2030 targets.
- Position your organisation as a leader in circular packaging delivery.
- Gain recognition from a cross-sector, independent judging panel and industry peers.
- Contribute to industry-wide learning and case studies.
- Benchmark your performance against peers.

Who can enter?

The Awards are open to APCO members only. Entries are welcome from:

- Brand owners and retailers.
- Packaging manufacturers and suppliers.
- Recyclers and resource recovery operators.
- Industry bodies, NGOs and partnerships.
- Small to medium enterprises.

All entries must demonstrate initiatives that have been implemented within the previous two years, not concepts or early-stage pilots.

Is there a cost to submit an entry?

An entry fee of \$550.00 applies to your first submission. Subsequent submissions are \$165.00 each.

Before beginning your submission, you will be directed to a secure Stripe* payment page. Once payment is complete, you will receive a link to the **Submissions Portal** via email, along with a tax receipt.

Entry fees contribute to the administration, governance and delivery of the 2026 APCO Biennial Awards program, including submission management, judging, moderation, reporting and associated program costs.

**Fees may apply.*

Get ready to use the Award Portal



Download the Submission Template



View the video tutorial

Writing your submission content

Structure your submission under the three headings as the template, in the same order, so judges can follow it against the scoring rubric:

- *Impact & Outcomes (60%)* — lead with your strongest measurable results. Include baseline data, quantified outcomes and timeframes.
- *Innovation & Circular Design (30%)* — explain what's new or improved about your approach and how it can be replicated or scaled.
- *Leadership & Credibility (10%)* — cover governance, transparency and collaboration, but keep it concise; it carries the least weight.

Tip: Match the weighting in your writing effort to. Roughly 60% of your content should focus on impact, 30% on innovation, and 10% on leadership.

Gather your assets

1. Download the *Submission Template* and work through it section by section.
2. Write your *Impact, Innovation and Leadership* responses first, since these carry the score.
3. Add your *Category Alignment* paragraph last, once your responses are finalised (it should reference points you've already made).
4. Save the completed template and upload it in Step 7 below.
5. Gather your logo, website URL, photos and video link separately — these are uploaded as their own fields, not part of the Content file.

APCO reserves the right to review and amend entry fees, discount arrangements and eligibility criteria for future award programs. Any changes will be published prior to the opening of submissions.

If you have any questions, please refer to the event website FAQ or contact events@apco.org.au

Scoring criteria and weightings

The Awards *Portal* and the *Submission Template* are built around the same structure. Preparing your written content in this order before you open the portal makes the whole process faster.

Submission Template section	Where it goes in the Portal	Scored?
1. Entry details (Title, Category, Keywords)	Title and Presentation, Category and Keywords tabs	Sets your category
2. Organisation and project overview	Organisation and project overview tab (Biography)	Context only
3. Submission content (Impact, Innovation, Leadership)	Uploaded as your Content file, Award Submission tab	Yes — 100% of score
4. Category alignment	Included within your Content file upload	Supports scoring
5. Supporting evidence	Logo, website, photos and video fields, Award Submission tab	Supports scoring

How we judge your submission

Every entry is assessed by our independent, qualified judges against a published set of criteria — and every judging and moderation decision is documented and capable of review.

Our selected judges bring demonstrate expertise relevant to this year's award categories, each holding a wealth of knowledge about our industry. All judges have signed a Confidentiality Agreement and declare any Conflicts of Interest.

1. Independent scoring happens first. Judges score every entry on their own, before any group discussion, so no single opinion can dominate the outcome.
2. Scores are calculated automatically. Our judging software removes manual score calculation, eliminating human error or bias in the maths.
3. The moderation panel reviews scoring consistency, significant variances between judges, evidence quality and conflict declarations. This safeguards fairness, and doesn't re-judge submissions.
4. Winners are confirmed only after final moderation, review of the highest-ranked entries and consideration of evidence quality — and every outcome is endorsed by APCO's CEO and Board.

Got questions?

If you have any questions about your submission or the portal, please refer to the event website FAQ or

Contact events@apco.org.au