



Association of Science and Technology Centers

# Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards

Information Session  
June 10, 2024

# Agenda

- ▶ Background on Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards
- ▶ New structure for 2024
  - New categories and criteria
  - Recognition of all stages of development
  - Request for evidence of impact
- ▶ How to apply
- ▶ Tips for submitting a strong nomination
- ▶ Questions



## Background on Leading Edge Awards

- ▶ Leading Edge Awards program established in 2005 to recognize excellence in our field
  - Since that time, Leading Edge Awards have presented more than 70 awards to organizations and more than 30 awards to individuals
- ▶ Awards were named in honor of **Roy L. Shafer**, a former ASTC Board chair and president and CEO of COSI in Columbus, Ohio, after his passing in 2005
- ▶ Although there has been some evolution of categories and criteria, over the past year, the Awards Committee undertook the first full-scale review of the program since it was established

## Awards Committee

### CO-CHAIRS

**Sam Dean\***, *CEO, Scott Family Amazeum*

**Jonah Cohen**, *STEM Education Specialist, McWane Science Center*

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Katie Anderson**, *Senior Director, Museum Operations, U.S. Space and Rocket Center*

**Irena Cieślińska**, *Program Director, Copernicus Science Centre (Poland)*

**Andrea Durham**, *Executive Director, SMUD Museum of Science and Curiosity*

**Robin Gose\***, *President and CEO, MOXI, The Wolf Museum of Exploration + Innovation*

**Maribel Ibarra**, *General Director, Sietecolores Ideas Interactivas (Mexico)*

**Alexandra Jackson**, *Director of Programs & Partnerships, Sciencenter*

**Megan Ramer**, *Director of Programs, Connecticut Science Center*

**Tifferney White**, *CEO, Louisiana Children's Museum*

**Darryl Williams**, *Senior Vice President of Science and Education, The Franklin Institute*

### STAFF LIAISONS

**Adam Fagen**, *Director of Communications, Advocacy, and Engagement*

**Kalie Sacco**, *Director of Member Strategy*

**Daniel Bateman**, *Coordinator of Community and Conference*

\* Member of ASTC Board of Directors

## The process

- ▶ Committee started from first principles on the goals of ASTC’s awards and recognition program
  - The committee reflected on the history of the Leading Edge Awards, how well the program aligns with ASTC and field priorities, solicited feedback at conference and beyond, reviewed other awards programs, and considered all aspects of the current awards
  
- ▶ From that consideration, several themes emerged
  - Awards should be explicitly tied to ASTC’s strategic framework
  - Awards should be accessible to all sizes and types of members
  - Provide an opportunity to recognize achievements at all stages of development—including completed achievements, mature programs, and early-stage innovations—helping meet members where they are
  - Continue to recognize both organizations and individuals
  - Think of the awards as a “constellation of excellence” that collectively represents the breadth and diversity of our field
  - Provide more flexibility for the committee in number and categorization of awards

## Purpose of ASTC awards

- ▶ Provide an articulation of key field-wide priorities in alignment with ASTC's strategy
- ▶ Identify excellence that can serve as case studies for others in the field and add to the knowledge base on which our field can learn from, adapt, and build upon
- ▶ Provide external validation for member organizations and individuals of their accomplishments and innovative approaches
- ▶ Stimulate the advancement of individual members and the field as a whole

## Previous award categories

- ▶ In the past, award categories focused mostly on *what*
  - Business Practice
  - Community Service
  - Resilience
  - Visitor Experience
  - Individual Leadership
- ▶ New focus is more on *why*

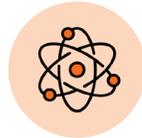
## Award categories

- ▶ Four perennial categories that follow from ASTC strategic framework

### The Work of Our Members



Support lifelong  
science learning



Connect science  
and society



Engage diverse  
communities



Partner to tackle global  
and local challenges

- ▶ Up to two rotating categories
  - Reflect current trends, challenges, or other timely topics
  - Informed by input from ASTC Board and other committees, especially Global Trends and Leadership and Field Development

## Areas of focus for 2024

Perennial

- **Support Lifelong Science Learning**

Efforts that demonstrate effective, evidence-based approaches to learning, including learning at all life stages, intergenerational opportunities for learning, and activities to better understand what works.

- **Engage Diverse Audiences**

Efforts that reach or invite participation from audiences who are marginalized and have been excluded from science and science engagement opportunities and/or that respond to shifting community demographics (e.g., an aging population, a growing community of migrants or refugees). Note that nominations and the selection process should account for institutional and community contexts.

- **Connect Science and Society and Partner to Tackle Local and Global Issues**

Efforts that involve members' activities to act on an issue of local or global importance, including equitable partnerships with organizations, groups, or communities.

- **Strengthen the Organization to Thrive as a Community Leader**

Efforts that contribute to the organization's operations and administration so that it is adaptable, supported by a diverse and skilled staff, sustainable finances, and collaborative relationships, and that is recognized as a leader in its community.

2024

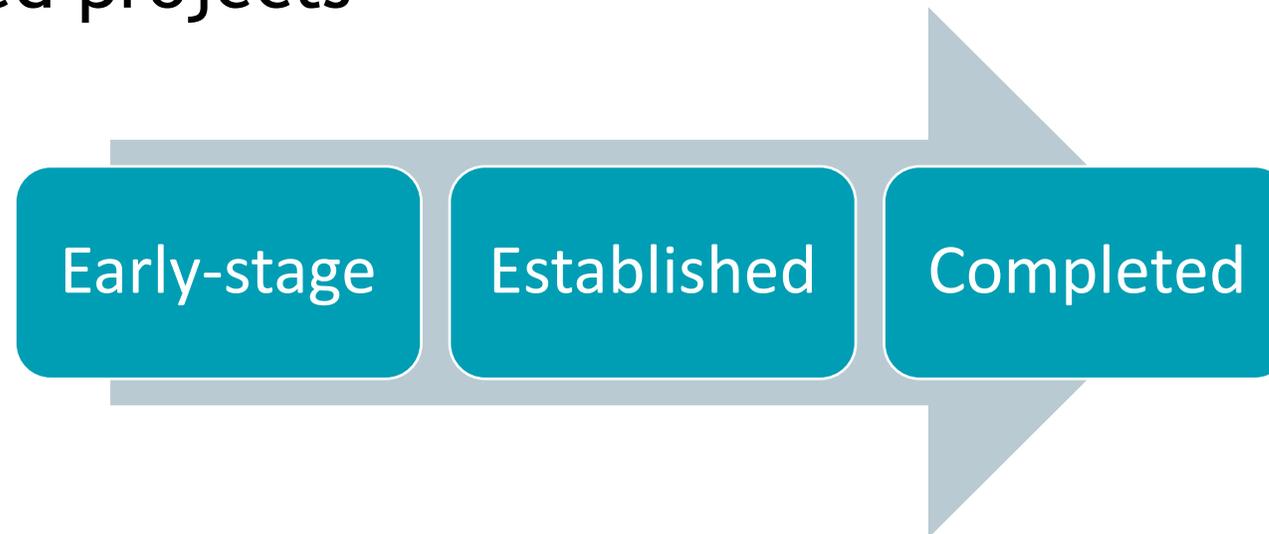
- **Natural History Settings (*in alignment with a conference special call*)**

Efforts especially relevant to natural history museums and other natural history settings—such as achievements related to research, collections, authenticity, and decolonization.

## Nominations at all stages of development

ASTC wants to lift up achievements at all stages of development and will separately review nominations of:

- ▶ Early-stage innovation or emerging effort
- ▶ Established efforts
- ▶ Completed projects



## Evidence of impact

ASTC is looking for nominations to include evidence of impact and/or external validation, such as

- ▶ Letters of reference from key partners or individuals
- ▶ Evaluation data
- ▶ Research publications
- ▶ News clippings
- ▶ Other documentation



Provide available evidence, not necessarily conduct additional research and evaluation

Will vary based on project and stage of development

## How to apply

Visit Leading Edge Awards website:  
[www.astc.org/awards](http://www.astc.org/awards)

**SUBMIT ORGANIZATIONAL AWARD  
NOMINATION**

**SUBMIT INDIVIDUAL AWARD  
NOMINATION**



## Organizational Awards

- ▶ Single nomination form for all organizational awards
- ▶ Short description of the what is being nominated (250 words)
- ▶ Nominations flag one or two areas of focus
  - Single response box to tell how the nomination aligns with these areas (up to 750 words)
- ▶ Does the nomination relate to natural history settings? If so, how?
- ▶ Flags to help with the review
  - Small science center
  - Large science center
  - Allied member
  - Established effort
  - Completed project
  - Emerging or early-stage effort
- ▶ Sign-off by chief executive

## Individual Awards

- ▶ Nominations flag one or two areas of focus
  - Single response box to tell how the nomination aligns with these areas (up to 750 words)
- ▶ Does the nomination relate to natural history settings? If so, how?
- ▶ Flags to help with the review
  - Chief executive
  - Other senior leader
  - Other staff
  - Volunteer
- ▶ Sign-off by nominee's supervisor

## Eligibility

- ▶ ASTC-member organization in good standing
- ▶ Nominations encouraged from both Science Center and Museum Members and Allied Members
- ▶ Nominations should describe an achievement that has occurred since January 1, 2022
- ▶ Self-nominations are welcome for all organizational awards
- ▶ Self-nominations not allowed for individual awards (but nominator may be from the same organization)

# New nomination forms

## Organizational Award Nomination



Please complete and submit this form to submit an organizational award nomination for the 2024 [Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards](#) from the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC).

ASTC has restructured the awards program for this year. Although the categories and processes may be different, we're looking to lift up a wide range of achievements among ASTC members of all types!

The ASTC Awards Committee will seek to recognize achievements in areas that explicitly align with ASTC's [strategic framework](#):

- Support Lifelong Science Learning
- Engage Diverse Audiences
- Connect Science and Society and Partner to Tackle Local and Global Issues
- Strengthen the Organization to Thrive as a Community Leader
- Achievements relevant to Natural History Settings

Nominations will be judged according to how the achievement aligns with one of more of the priority areas listed above; the creativity of the program or activity described; the nature of any relevant partnerships and collaborations; the potential to serve as a model of creative thinking and best practices for the field as a whole, and embodiment of ASTC's [commitment to diversity, accessibility, inclusion, and equity](#).

## Nominated Achievement

In this section, you will describe the achievement that is being nominated for a Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Award.

Nomination name \*

Add a few words to identify the achievement being nominated, such as the name of the nominated project or activity.

What is the stage of development for the nominated achievement? \*

Briefly describe the achievement that is being nominated. In THIS response, just tell us what the project is; below, you will tell us why it is important. \*

0/200

## Evidence of Impact

Please provide evidence of impact for the nominated achievement. For example, this might include letters of reference from key partner organizations or individuals, evaluation data, research publications, news clippings, and other documentation. The aim is for nominators to provide available evidence, not necessarily to conduct additional research and evaluation.

Impact Upload

**Browse Files**  
Drag and drop files here

Upload up to five files.

# Review rubric

- ▶ Will separately review large vs. small science center vs. Allied Member (and CEO from non-CEO)
- ▶ Will separately consider different stages of development
- ▶ Assess how well the nomination describes the achievement

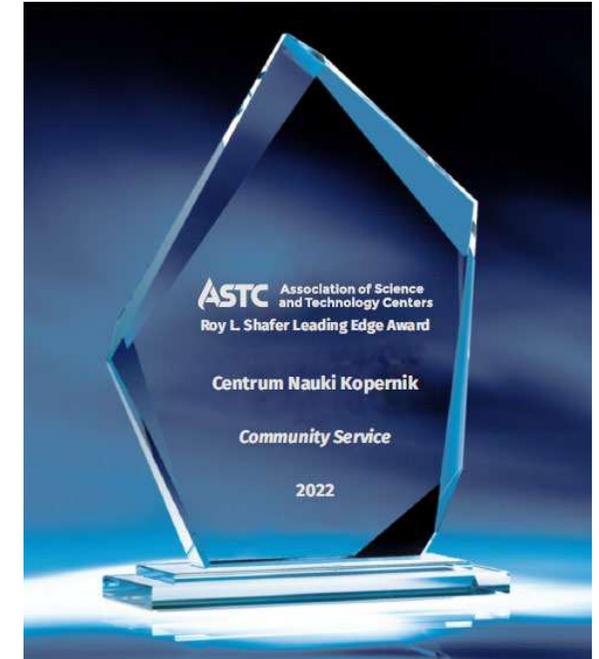
	1	2	3	4	5
Support lifelong science learning					
Engage diverse audiences					
Connect science and society and partner to tackle local and global issues					
Strengthen the organization to thrive as a community leader					

- ▶ Is the nomination especially relevant to natural history settings?
- ▶ Should the nomination be a contender for an award? In which area(s)?

# Recognition of recipients

## ▶ Awards Presentation

- Recognition at the ASTC Annual Conference
  - Recipients receive one complimentary full registration to conference
  - Opportunity to share experience, including through a poster, office hours, etc.
  - Exclusive ribbon/pin for award recipients to attach to their name badge
  - Award trophy
  - Recognition during a conference plenary session with information about why they were selected
  
- Recognition throughout the year
  - Visibility not limited to those at conference
  - Highlighted on ASTC website and digital platforms and publications
  - Series of webinars, discussions, or other virtual events throughout the year
  - Encouragement for a *Dimensions* article on the achievement



## Timeline

Date	Milestone
May 23	Open nominations
June 10	Information session (i.e., this webinar)
<b>June 28</b>	<b>Nomination deadline</b>
July-August	Awards Committee review and deliberation
Late August	Notification of recipients
September 28-30	Award announcement and presentation at ASTC 2024
October - Spring 2025	Virtual programs, articles, and recognition

## Tips for submitting a strong nomination

- ▶ **Clearly describe the achievement that is being nominated**
  - Help the committee understand the project or activity
  - You may include supporting documents (e.g., presentations, videos, articles, illustrations, photographs) if helpful to provide additional context
  
- ▶ **Address the criteria identified**
  - Pick one (or two) of the four elements *most* relevant to your nomination
  - Focus your discussion on those elements; picking more will *not* improve the review
  
- ▶ **Provide compelling and relevant evidence of impact**
  - For example, if the project involves a partnership, would expect to see a letter from the partner
  - Not expecting you to conduct additional research and evaluation; share what is available

## Tips for submitting a strong nomination (continued)

- ▶ **Submit completed acknowledgement from**
  - Chief executive acknowledgement for organizational award nominations
  - Supervisor acknowledgement for individual award nominations
  
- ▶ **Avoid submitting more than one nomination for the same achievement**
  - This includes nominating an individual for leadership of a specific project
  
- ▶ **Focus on natural history is an *additional* category, not an expectation of all nominations**
  
- ▶ **Individual nominations need not be focused on a single achievement**
  - Can focus on leadership across projects or across a career

# Questions?

