



Canada's Volunteer Awards

Guidelines for Nominations

Pathways to National Recognition

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WELCOME

Canada's Volunteer Awards (CVA) welcomes you into our national community of excellence. By engaging in the nomination process, you are joining a tradition that celebrates exceptional dedication to service, community leadership, and collective impact.

This guide is designed to **support you as a nominator**. Inside, you'll find clear guidance and practical tools to help you prepare strong nominations that highlight the achievements of volunteers, businesses, social enterprises, and community organizations whose outstanding contributions strengthen communities across the country.

Our team is ready to help. Whether you need clarification, technical support, or guidance in preparing your nomination, comprehensive tools, resources and direct assistance, the team is available throughout the process.

ABOUT THE AWARDS

CVA recognizes excellence in the voluntary sector through national and regional award categories each nomination cycle. Together, these highlight the wide range of contributions across Canada and ensure that every region has champions celebrated on a national stage.

National Award Category



Thérèse Casgrain Lifelong Achievement Award

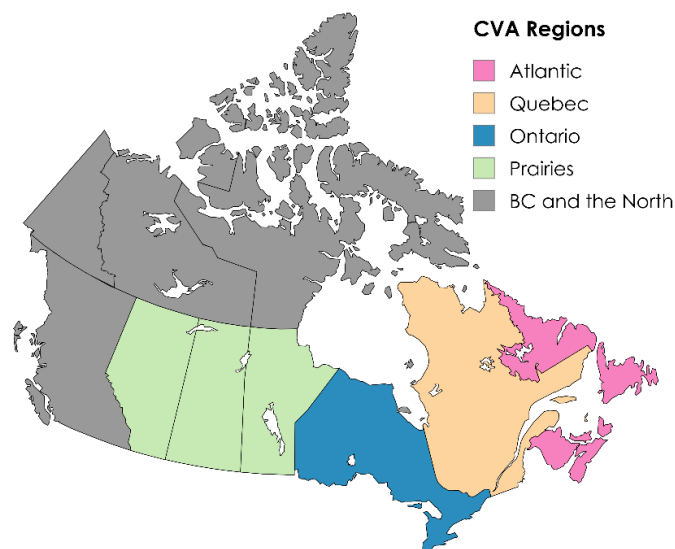
Recognizes individuals with 20 years or more of volunteer service, whose long-term commitment has:

- Inspired and mobilized other volunteers, demonstrating sustained leadership within their communities.
- Made a meaningful and lasting difference through their volunteer efforts, contributing to stronger, more resilient communities.

Regional Award Categories

Nominations are accepted under five regions of Canada. This structure ensures balanced recognition nationwide and highlights the diversity of volunteerism across Canada.

- **Atlantic:** Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick
- **Quebec**
- **Ontario**
- **Prairies:** Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba
- **British Columbia and the North:** British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut





Community Leader

Recognizes individuals or groups of volunteers who take a leading role in addressing social issues, by:

- Volunteering their time to support an organization, cause, or community need.
- Mobilizing people and resources to strengthen community bonds and advance solutions to social challenges.



Emerging Leader

Recognizes Canadians aged 18–30 who demonstrate leadership through volunteerism and help strengthen their communities, by:

- Contributing time, skills, and vision to create meaningful community impact.
- Demonstrating creativity, initiative, and positive change.



Business Leader

Recognizes businesses and social enterprises that demonstrate corporate social responsibility and strengthen communities through volunteer support, by.:

- Promoting and supporting volunteering at local, regional, and/or national levels.
- Encouraging employee participation in volunteer initiatives.
- Creating positive social, cultural, or environmental impacts through responsible business practices.



Social Innovator

Recognizes non-profit organizations and registered charities that address social challenges through innovative approaches, by:

- Using new models, technologies, or partnerships to serve and strengthen communities.
- Introducing creative, effective methods that enhance their ability to meet community needs and drive positive impact.

RECOGNITION OF AWARD RECIPIENTS

Recipients are honoured in ways that highlight both national appreciation and local visibility. Recognition is designed to celebrate achievements meaningfully within communities and networks while reinforcing the national importance of volunteerism.

Canada's Volunteer Awards recognizes recipients at a **national ceremony**. Recipients also take part in a session to **share best practices** in volunteering.

All recipients receive a **certificate of recognition signed by the Prime Minister**.

Recipients also choose a **registered non-profit organization in Canada to receive a grant**:

- \$ 5,000 for each regional award recipient
- \$10,000 for the national award recipient

Recipients' biographies are featured on Canada.ca and shared across official Departmental social media channels. Sharing these stories inspires new nominations, strengthens the visibility of volunteerism, and highlights the diversity of contributions that sustain Canada's communities.

This recognition model connects national honours to local celebrations, reinvests in community organizations, and ensures that recipients' stories continue to inspire others across the country.

ELIGIBILITY

Who Can Be Nominated



- **Individual or group of individuals** – Canadians who give their time, skills, and leadership to strengthen communities.
- **Business** – Companies registered in Canada that contribute to addressing social challenges.
- **Non-profit organization** – Canadian registered organizations that mobilize volunteers and deliver services to meet community needs.
- **Social enterprise** – Canadian registered organizations that combine business approaches with social purpose to create sustainable impact.

Individuals or Groups

- Must be **Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or protected persons**.
- Age requirement:
 - **Emerging Leader category** – nominees must be between 18 and 30 years old.
 - **Other categories** – nominees must be 18 years of age or older.
- Must have **contributed to addressing social challenges** in their community. International achievements may be noted, but the nomination must demonstrate clear domestic impact.
- Political activity (supporting or opposing political parties, candidates, or elected officials) and public advocacy work (efforts primarily aimed at influencing legislation or government policy) are not eligible for consideration.

Businesses, Social Enterprises, Non-Profits and Charities

- Must be **registered in Canada** (through a business number or charity registration).
- Must have **contributed to addressing social challenges** in Canadian communities. Examples include: supporting volunteer initiatives or programs; providing resources, expertise, or partnerships to strengthen communities; innovating to expand access, inclusion, or sustainability.
- One nomination per nominee will be accepted.
- Nominations must include written text under all six nomination criteria (please see below).
- Nominations must include at least one Letter of Support (please see below).

NOMINATION CRITERIA

The nomination process is guided by six criteria. These criteria highlight the many ways volunteers, organizations, and businesses contribute to their communities and to Canada as a whole. They are designed to capture both measurable outcomes and the inspirational qualities that make volunteerism so impactful.



The six criteria are:

1. Role (5 points • 10% of total)

Describe the nominee's contributions, including the actions they have taken, the leadership they have shown, and the context in which they have volunteered or led. Consider the scope of their involvement and the significance of their role in advancing volunteerism.

2. Impact (15 points • 30% of total)

Explain how the nominee addressed a challenge or need, the difference they made, and how their efforts are sustained over time. Highlight tangible outcomes as well as lasting change.

3. Reach (15 points • 30% of total)

Identify who benefitted from the nominee's efforts, how many people were reached, and what was gained. Note whether their impact extended beyond their immediate community to regional, national, or broader audiences.

4. Engagement (5 points • 10% of total)

Describe how the nominee involved others in their work — inspiring volunteers, building partnerships, mobilizing resources, or engaging organizations. Show how their efforts foster collaboration and collective action.

5. Challenges (5 points • 10% of total)

Outline the obstacles the nominee faced and how they overcame them. Emphasize resilience, creativity, and determination in addressing barriers to success.

6. Inspiration (5 points • 10% of total)

Illustrate how the nominee serves as a role model — for individuals, organizations, or communities. Describe how they share knowledge, mentor others, and inspire broader participation in volunteerism.

Key Considerations

- Each criterion provides a lens through which the nominee's contributions are considered.
- Nominations should balance **facts and evidence** (numbers, reach, sustainability) with **stories and examples** that bring the nominee's impact to life.
- The criteria are interconnected: together they form a complete picture of the nominee's role, influence, and legacy.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letters of support are an essential part of the nomination package. They provide independent perspectives that validate the nominee's contributions and strengthen the overall submission. These letters help demonstrate the nominee's impact, credibility, and the value of their work within the community. Annex A is available with an **example template for a letter of support**.

Requirements:

- 1 to 3 letters are required.
- Letters must be addressed to *Canada's Volunteer Awards*.
- Maximum of 2 pages (approximately 1,000 words).
- Must be dated within the last 6 months.
- Must come from someone with direct knowledge of the nominee's contributions.
- Each letter must include the author's name, address, and relationship to the nominee.
- Letters cannot be written by the nominator or the nominee.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- Provide first-hand evidence of the nominee's contributions.
- Highlight the extent of the nominee's impact.
- Offer credible testimony from individuals or organizations who have directly benefitted or observed the nominee's work.

YOUR ROLE AS A NOMINATOR (How to Nominate)

As a nominator, you shine a light on the achievements of others, telling their story with care and clarity so their impact can be fully understood. Each nomination is both a recognition of achievement and an invitation for others to see the power of volunteerism in action!

As a nominator, you will:

Register online

- ↳ Create a CVA Online account to create a nomination.

Get ready to nominate

- ↳ Choose the award category
- ↳ Ensure your nominee meets all eligibility requirements
- ↳ Review the nomination criteria
- ↳ Obtain the nominee's consent to be nominated

Tell the story

- ↳ Provide all required information about your nominee.
- ↳ Respond to each of the six criteria by presenting the nominee's contributions in a clear and compelling way, highlighting specific examples and outcomes.

Gather letter(s) of support

- ↳ Request and collect at least one support letter that reinforces the nominee's impact and credibility, then upload them into the CVA Online system.

Submit the nomination

- ↳ The nominee will then receive an automated request to review the nomination and confirm their consent.
- ↳ You will receive confirmation once the submission has been successfully received.

Stay connected

- ↳ CVA staff may reach out during the screening process for clarification or additional details.

NOMINATION REVIEW PROCESS

After you have submitted your complete nomination, it enters a structured three stage review designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and national credibility. Each stage plays a distinct role in evaluating the strength, relevance, and impact of your nominee's contributions.

- 1. Eligibility Screening:** CVA program officials review all nominations to confirm that eligibility requirements are met.
- 2. Regional Assessment:** Regional Reviewers evaluate eligible nominations. Using a common scoring framework, they score submissions to reflect both merit and regional context.
- 3. National Evaluation:** The National Advisory Committee reviews the top-ranked nominations in each category and region. After careful consideration of the assessment criteria, they prepare a list of recommend recipients to the Minister of Jobs and Families, who makes the selection decision.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

To assist nominators in preparing complete submissions, a range of resources and supports are available:

Guidance Materials


These tools are designed to help you navigate the nomination process with clarity and confidence:

- **Example Template for Letters of Support** (Annex A)
Sample structure to help letter writers prepare effective endorsements.
- **Nomination Checklist - Quick Reference** (Annex B)
One-page summary of all requirements (criteria, letters, deadlines, consent).
- **Storytelling Guide** (Annex C)
Guidance on how to frame a volunteer's journey in a compelling way. Combines measurable outcomes with human impact. Includes prompts and storytelling tips.
- **Nomination Tips** (Annex D)
Writing advice to sharpen your submission. Includes "Do's and Don'ts" for clarity, specificity, and sustainability of impact.
- **FAQ Frequently Asked Questions** (Annex E)
Covers common uncertainties: eligibility, deadlines, consent, and technical issues.
- **Key Terminology** (Annex F)
Defines key terms used throughout the nomination process to ensure clarity.

CVA Support Channels



- **Email** – Write to info-cva-pbc-gd@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca with questions or requests for guidance.
- **Phone** – Call the CVA team at **1-877-825-0434** for assistance.
- **Online Information Sessions** – Offered during the Call for Nominations period, these sessions provide practical guidance and answer common questions about the nomination process.

 We invite you to join our **Friends of CVA** community by signing up for [email updates](#) so you can remain engaged and informed.

ANNEX A

Example Template for Letters of Support

This template is provided to help you structure an effective and eligible letter of support. Use it as a guide to highlight the nominee's impact and your personal connection to their volunteer contributions. Use of this template is optional; however, all letters of support must include the required elements. Digital and hard copy formats are accepted.

Required Elements to Include:

- Date (must be within the past six months)
- Nominee's full name
- Your relationship to the nominee
- Examples of the nominee's contributions
- Your signature, name, relationship, and contact information

Date (dated and written within the past six (6) months)

Dear Canada's Volunteer Awards,

This is your opportunity to explain why you support the nomination.

Please include your nominee's name in the letter. The letter must not exceed two pages (1000 words).

Explain how you know the nominee (how did you learn about the nominee's volunteering? How long have you known the nominee?)

Provide examples of how the nominee's contributions have made a difference. (You must have direct knowledge of their contributions.) You could describe:

- *the role they played in solving a local issue*
- *the impact of their volunteer efforts*
- *how they inspire others*
- *highlight any challenges they overcame*

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name

Your Relationship to the nominee (for example, supervisor, colleague, beneficiary of contribution)

Your Contact information (complete address, email address and/or telephone number)



ANNEX B






Nomination Checklist (Quick Reference)

Use this checklist to confirm your nomination package is complete before submission.

Before You Begin

- ↘ Choose the correct award category
- ↘ Ensure your nominee is eligible
- ↘ Review the assessment criteria
- ↘ Obtain the nominee's consent to be nominated

Core Requirements

-  **Register online** – Create a CVA Online account.
-  **Nomination** – Complete all required fields clearly and accurately.
-  **Letters of support** – 1 to 3 letters, max 2 pages each, dated within 6 months.
-  **Consent** – Both nominator and nominee confirm consent electronically via CVA Online.
-  **Deadlines** – Submit before the Call for Nominations closing date.

Nomination Criteria (Six lenses to address)


- **Role** – Describe contributions and leadership.
- **Impact** – Show difference made and sustainability.
- **Reach** – Identify who benefitted and scale of impact.
- **Engagement** – Explain how others were involved.
- **Challenges** – Note obstacles and resilience.
- **Inspiration** – Show how nominee serves as a role model.

Nomination Package Submission

- ✓ Completed nomination form
- ✓ 1–3 letters of support
- ✓ Signed consent forms
- ✓ Supporting documents (if applicable)
- ✓ Confirmation email received after submission

Stay Connected

- Remain available for clarification requests from CVA staff.
- Share nominee's story within your networks to inspire others.

 **Tip:** Balance facts (numbers, reach, sustainability) with stories that bring the nominee's impact to life.

Storytelling Guide

Compelling nominations tell a story that reviewers can connect with. Facts and numbers show impact, but stories bring the nominee's journey to life. Use this guide to combine evidence with narrative.

Key Elements of a Compelling Story

- **The Spark:** *What set everything in motion?*
- **The Journey:** *How did their involvement unfold over time?*
- **The Turning Points:** *What moments shaped their path?*
- **The Difference Made:** *What changed because of their efforts?*
- **The Legacy:** *How does their work continue to matter?*

Prompts to Guide Your Writing

Use these prompts to add depth, clarity, and emotional resonance to your story:

- **Bring clarity to the nominee's role**
*What unique strengths, skills, or perspectives did the nominee bring to their work?
How did their approach differ from what others were doing?*
- **Show the human impact**
*What moments best illustrate the nominee's compassion, leadership, or dedication?
Is there a story or quote from someone affected that captures the nominee's impact?*
- **Highlight collaboration and community**
*How did the nominee build trust, partnerships, or momentum?
Who did they bring along with them, and why does that matter?*
- **Demonstrate growth and learning**
*What did the nominee learn along the way?
How did they adapt when things didn't go as planned?*
- **Connect to broader change**
*How has the nominee's work strengthened their community or inspired others to act?
What lasting ripple effects can be seen today?*

Balance Facts and Human Impact

- **Facts & Outcomes:** Include numbers, reach, sustainability (e.g., "mobilized 200 volunteers," "expanded access to services for 1,000 families").
- **Human Stories:** Share personal anecdotes or quotes that show the nominee's character and the lived impact of their work.

Tips for Storytelling

- Use clear, active language (e.g., "She launched a program that...").
- Highlight both scale (how many people were reached) and depth (how lives were changed).
- Show progression: from challenge → action → impact → inspiration.
- Keep the focus on the nominee but include voices of those they helped.

Nomination Tips

Nominations should combine clarity, evidence, and storytelling. Use this guide to sharpen your submission.

Do's

- **Be specific** – Provide clear details about the nominee's actions, roles, and leadership.
- **Use examples** – Highlight concrete stories, numbers, or outcomes that show impact.
- **Balance facts with stories** – Pair measurable results with human stories that bring the contribution to life.
- **Show sustainability** – Emphasize how the nominee's efforts continue to make a difference over time.
- **Highlight uniqueness** – Explain what sets the nominee apart from others in their field or community.
- **Connect to criteria** – Align your writing with the six nomination criteria (Role, Impact, Reach, Engagement, Challenges, Inspiration).

Don'ts

- **Avoid repetition** – Don't restate the same point in multiple sections; vary your language and focus.
- **Don't generalize** – Phrases like "they are great" or "they help a lot" lack evidence.
- **Don't exaggerate** – Keep claims credible; let facts and testimonials speak for themselves.
- **Don't overlook context** – Explain the challenge or need the nominee addressed, not just the outcome.
- **Don't forget the audience** – Write for reviewers who may not know the nominee or their community.

Quick Writing Reminders

- Keep sentences clear and concise.
- Use active voice (e.g., "She mobilized 200 volunteers" rather than "Volunteers were mobilized").
- Vary word choice to avoid repeating terms such as "excellence" or "leadership" too often.
- Think of the nomination as both a case for recognition and a story that inspires others.
- AI digital writing tools can help you shape your ideas, strengthen wording, and align your writing with CVA award criteria, but the nomination must reflect your own knowledge of the nominee and their contributions.

Annex E

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Purpose of the Awards

What is the purpose of Canada's Volunteer Awards?

- Canada's Volunteer Awards (CVA) recognizes the contributions of volunteers, non-profits, charities, and businesses across the country. The Awards celebrate exceptional service, inspire Canadians to make a difference through volunteering, and support the Government of Canada's interest in promoting innovative solutions to local challenges.

Eligibility

Who can be nominated?

- Individuals, groups, businesses, non-profit organizations, and social enterprises registered in Canada. Nominees must demonstrate contributions that address social challenges and strengthen communities.

Can I nominate myself?

- Yes. Self nominations are accepted, provided all eligibility requirements are met. Independent letters of support are still required.

Can I nominate a family member?

- Yes. Family members may nominate, but at least one letter of support must come from a non-family member.

Can I nominate someone who has passed away?

- Posthumous nominations are not accepted. However, nominees who pass away after their nomination is submitted remain eligible to receive a posthumous award.

Can I nominate someone for political or public advocacy work?

- No. Activities primarily aimed at supporting or opposing political parties, candidates, or influencing legislation are not eligible.

I want to nominate someone who recently turned 18. Most of their volunteering was before they turned 18. Are they eligible?

- Yes. If the nominee is 18 years old at the time of submission, they are eligible. Proof of age may be required during assessment.

Nomination History

Can I nominate a person or organization that has been nominated in the past?

- Yes. Previous nominees may be nominated again, but a new nomination must be submitted.

Can I nominate someone who has been nominated by another nominator?

- Only one nomination per nominee can be accepted. If multiple nominations are received, the nominee will be contacted to determine which one to retain. Otherwise, the first nomination received will be accepted.

Regions and Categories

How should I select the region for my nomination?

- Choose the region where the nominee resides.

I want to nominate a national organization active in multiple regions. Should I submit more than one nomination?

- No. Select the region where the organization’s head office is located.

Deadlines and Submission

When is the deadline for nominations?

- All nominations must be submitted before the closing date of the Call for Nominations. Late submissions cannot be accepted.

Can I edit my nomination after submission?

- No. Once submitted, nominations are final. Please review carefully before confirming.

How do I know my nomination was received?

- You will receive a confirmation email once your submission is complete. If you do not receive it within 72 hours, contact the CVA team.

Technical Issues (CVA Online)

What if I forget my CVA Online password?

- Use the “Forgot Password” link on the login page to reset your credentials.

What file formats are accepted for uploads?

- PDF and Word documents are preferred. Ensure files meet the size limits indicated in the system. Multimedia files are not accepted.

What if the system crashes while I’m submitting?

- Log back in to CVA Online. Your progress is saved automatically, and you can resume where you left off.

Can I submit a handwritten nomination form?

- Yes. For alternate nomination formats, contact info-cva-pbc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca.

Letters of Support

How many letters of support should I include?

- You must include at least one letter and no more than three.

Who can provide a letter of support?

- Someone with direct knowledge of the nominee’s contributions. Letters written by the nominator or nominee will not be accepted.

What are the requirements for letters of support?

- Each letter must:
 - be a maximum of 2 pages
 - be dated within the last 6 months
 - be written by someone other than the nominator or nominee
 - provide specific examples of contributions and impact
 - be signed and include contact information

What happens if a letter does not meet requirements?

- It will be considered ineligible. Nominators may be asked to provide a new letter before the Call for Nominations closes.

Consent and Confidentiality

Why is nominee consent required?

- Consent confirms eligibility and verifies that the nominee is a Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or protected person under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, and at least 18 years of age. Consent also authorizes CVA to collect, share, and disclose nomination information with:
 - Regional Reviewers
 - National Advisory Committee members
 - The Minister of Jobs and Families
- It also allows award recipients' stories to be shared publicly.

How do I provide consent?

- Both the nominator and nominee must complete consent through CVA Online.

Is my nomination confidential?

- Yes. While nominee consent is required, nominators are not publicly disclosed. Personal information is protected and shared only with those involved in the official review and selection process.

Use of Information

How will the information in my nomination be used?

- Information may be used to:
 - screen the nomination for eligibility
 - assess the nomination
 - select award recipients.
- Information may be shared with:
 - the nominee's Member of Parliament
 - the Office of the Prime Minister
 - the public and/or media to announce recipients.
- It may also be used for research or program evaluation.

Recognition

What do recipients receive?

Recipients receive:

- a certificate signed by the Prime Minister
- a directed grant to support a Canadian non-profit organization
- national visibility through the CVA website and social media channels
- an invitation to a national award ceremony

Language Requirements

Can nominations be submitted in French or English?

- Yes. Nominations may be submitted in either official language.

Do all parts of the nomination need to be in the same language?

- No. Supporting documents may be submitted in either French or English.

More Questions

What should I do if I have more questions?

- Contact Canada's Volunteer Awards at **1-877-825-0434** or info-cva-pbc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Key Terminology

- **Business:** For profit enterprise incorporated under federal or provincial law.
- **Canadian Citizen:** A person described as a citizen under the *Citizenship Act* (by birth or naturalization).
- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Voluntary activities by a company to operate in an economic, social, and environmentally sustainable manner.
- **Non-profit Organization:** Associations, clubs, or societies organized exclusively for social welfare, civic improvement, recreation, or other nonprofit purposes.
- **Permanent Resident:** Someone with permanent resident status under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* who is not yet a citizen.
- **Registered Charity:** Charitable organizations, public foundations, or private foundations resident in Canada, using resources for charitable activities.
- **Social Challenges:** In the Canadian volunteerism context, *social challenges* are broadly understood as issues that affect the well-being, equity, and resilience of communities. They include social, economic, health, cultural, and environmental problems that volunteers, organizations, and enterprises work to address through service, innovation, and leadership.
- **Social Innovation:** A response to a social/environmental problem that results in better solutions than existing approaches. Examples: new social programs, new technologies, growth of social enterprises.
- **Sustainability:** The ability to deliver lasting benefits for communities, consistent with Canada's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It reflects the capacity to meet present needs — social, environmental, and economic — while ensuring future generations can continue to thrive.
- **Volunteerism:** Purposeful helping activities without monetary compensation, either formal (through organizations) or informal (direct help).