



ARIZONA ASSOCIATION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2026 GOLDEN PROSPECTOR AWARDS

Excellence in Economic Development Awards

Every year AAED honors significant contributions to the advancement of the organization and economic development within the State of Arizona. The Golden Prospector Awards were established by AAED to encourage and recognize economic development.

Deadline

The AAED Office must receive all entries and support materials by the deadline. Please send your materials via the AAED website or email to info@aaed.com.

Cost

July 10 - Early bird entries due by 4:00 p.m. - \$100

July 24 - All entries due by 4:00 p.m. - \$150

2026 GOLDEN PROSPECTOR AWARD CATEGORIES

PROMOTIONAL AWARDS

P1. Marketing Brochure -

A brochure or other marketing piece that introduces the state, county, community, region, or area of expertise to either:

- Prospects for industrial, commercial, retail, or general development opportunities;
- A specific purpose, such as promoting an industrial park or other specific types of promotions.

Golden Prospector Awards and Awards of Merit will be given in three areas:

- Economic Development Organization - Metro;
- Economic Development Organizations - Non-Metro;
- Service Providers.

P2. Website -

A website designed to promote a company, city, state, or regional economic development efforts and/or resources that support the economic development profession.

Golden Prospector Awards and Awards of Merit will be given in three areas:

- Economic Development Organization - Metro;
- Economic Development Organizations - Non-Metro;
- Service Providers.

P2. Multimedia Promotion -

A promotional piece, series of promotional pieces, or a promotional campaign that contains non-printed elements. This can include videos, mailed promotional items, etc.

Golden Prospector Awards and Awards of Merit will be given in three areas:

- Economic Development Organization - Metro;
- Economic Development Organizations - Non-Metro;
- Service Providers.

P4. Special Event -

A meeting, seminar, marketing tour, event, or trip designed to develop projects and promote economic development.

Golden Prospector Awards and Awards of Merit will be given in three areas:

- Economic Development Organization - Metro;
- Economic Development Organizations - Non-Metro;
- Service Providers.

PROJECT AWARDS

D1. Economic Development Deal of the Year -

Recognizes the locations and economic development agencies that attracted or developed the highest-impact projects. For this award, an "economic development deal" is defined as:

- A project or effort that resulted in the relocation/expansion of a company to a location served by the entering organization;
- A project or effort that resulted in the demonstrable retention of a company that would have otherwise left, in whole or in part, the territory served by the entering organization.

Golden Prospector Awards and Awards of Merit will be given in three areas:

- Economic Development Organizations - Population greater than 75,000;
- Economic Development Organizations - Population between 25,000 and 75,000;
- Economic Development Organizations - Population under 25,000.

D2. Economic Development Program/Processes -

Honors initiatives, programs, or processes that can document successful development outcomes. For this award, "programs/processes" is defined as:

- A new or improved program that advances the attraction, retention, or workforce development in a community;
- A new or improved process that helps streamline delivery of services through improved efficiencies, transparency, or monetary savings.

Golden Prospector Awards and Awards of Merit will be given in three areas:

- Economic Development Organizations - Population greater than 75,000;
- Economic Development Organizations - Population between 25,000 and 75,000;
- Economic Development Organizations - Population under 25,000.

Eligibility Criteria

- Open to all AAED members in good standing
- At least some part of the project must have occurred in 2025 and the project must have been completed by June 30, 2026
- For the project to be considered completed in the "Deal of the Year" category, it must be considered closed by the Municipality in which it is located and the regional or representative economic development organization or the Arizona Commerce Authority by June 30, 2026

A Complete Application

- One copy of the completed entry form (begins on page 5)
- Two-page summary
- PowerPoint presentation (no more than 10 slides)
 - Audio and/or video can be included in PowerPoint (optional)
- Letter of support (optional)
- Entry fee payment either by check or credit card
- All materials should be labeled with Organization Name, Entry Title, and Category

Entry Guidelines

- You may submit as many entries as you wish, but each entry must be accompanied by a separate entry form; payments may be combined in one check or transaction
- At least some part of the project must have occurred in 2025 and the project must have been completed by June 30, 2026
- Entries should include any supporting materials referenced in the judging criteria (page 4)
- Make sure that all of your materials are labeled with Entrant's Name, Organization, and Category

Entries

All entries must be submitted via the AAED website or emailed to info@aaed.com by 4 p.m. on the deadline dates. Early bird entries are due July 10 and all submissions due by July 24. You must clearly label your entry and any supporting material with your organization name, entry title, and the category which you are entering. Each individual entry must be uploaded separately.

Judging Process

All entries are judged based on the criteria included in the entry guidelines and each entry will be evaluated by at least three judges. Entries receiving 90% or more of the total points available are eligible for a Golden Prospector; entries receiving 89% - 80% of the total points available are eligible for an Award of Merit. The judges may award multiple winners or no winners, based on the total points awarded and entries received. Judges reserve the right to move entries to alternative categories they believe to be more appropriate. The decision of the judges is final. The judges, judging process, and deliberations are confidential. AAED reserves the right to exclude any entry for any reason.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Promotional Awards:

All Promotional Award submittals must include the following:

- Stated goal/mission;
- Effectiveness in achieving the stated goal/mission;
- Quality, completeness, and relevance of the information;
- Innovation/Creativity;
- Organization, visual appeal, and/or navigability;
- Contribution to the economic development profession or the provider's market.

Special Event Awards:

In addition to the above criteria, Special Event Awards must include the following details in their submittals:

- Event goals and objectives;
- Metrics, i.e., # of attendees versus goal;
- Audience for the event;
- Location(s) for the event;
- Any other relevant details.

Economic Development Deal of the Year Award:

Submittals must address the following:

- Deal structure - how the deal came together, including details on regional cooperation, innovative incentives, and training where applicable;
- Economic impact numbers - Such as an increase in the overall tax base, the creation of new jobs, or criteria relevant to the goals of the program;
- Square footage;
- Job creation and capital investment;
- Anticipated new wages as it relates to their community.

Economic Development Program/Processes Award:

Submittals must address the following:

- Economic impact numbers, if applicable;
- Amount of money or time saved;
- Sample of materials from the program or process;
- Any documents that support the outcome.

Application Checklist

- One copy of the completed entry form below
- PowerPoint Presentation (no more than 10 slides)
- Two-Page Summary
- Letter of support (optional)
- Entry fee payment either by check or credit card
- Hardcopy of marketing brochure (for P1. Marketing Brochure Award)

2026 GOLDEN PROSPECTOR AWARD ENTRY FORM

Application Category (check one):

- P1. Marketing Brochure
- P2. Website
- P3. Multimedia Promotion
- P4. Special Event
- D1. Deal of the Year
- D2. Economic Development Program/Processes

Applicant Area (check one):

- Economic Development Organizations - Metro
- Economic Development Organizations - Non-Metro
- Service Provider

For Project Awards Only

- Economic Development Organizations - Population over 75,000
- Economic Development Organizations - Population between 25,000 and 75,000
- Economic Development Organizations - Population under 25,000

Title of entry:

Start date:

Completion date:

Entrant Name:

Company/Organization:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone:

Email:

By submitting this entry, you agree that AAED has permission to publish any portion of the submission with proper credit being given to the submitting organization. The Awards Presentation will be during the Fall Forum in Flagstaff on September 24, 2026.