



Interpretive Media Award Competition 2026

Did you create a noteworthy piece of nonpersonal interpretive media in the past year?

A video, publication, exhibit, or something else? Submit it to the NAI Interpretive Media Awards Competition and earn the recognition it deserves!

Award recipients will be recognized at the NAI National conference and in an exclusive online ceremony. All entrants will be evaluated by a panel of experts who provide actionable, objective feedback.

The NAI Interpretive Media Awards committee is committed to elevating the success and relevance of the NAI Media Award program.

Entries must be submitted electronically by July 31, 2026

Open to all NAI members | **Apply at nai-us.org/MediaAwards**

Questions? Please contact:

Samantha Tableriou
Interpretive Media Awards Chair
stableriou@gmail.com

Heather Manier
Corporate Engagement & Partnerships Manager
heather@nai-us.org

The Value of Interpretive Media Awards

This awards program helps define successful interpretive media. It's crucial to recognize and share outstanding, effective, and innovative work as it establishes a high bar for future media-based interpretation, and helps steer ongoing efforts within this field.

Each entry receives valuable feedback from accomplished judges who work hard to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each entry. Feedback may be used as a blueprint for continued interpretive design improvement.

Award recipients receive a digital certificate and a digital "badge" with which to identify their project online and in-print. In addition to announcements on NAI's media channels, award winners will be listed in a special issue of the NAI Now newsletter, posted online and featured during an end-of-year, virtual celebration.

The Interpretive Media Awards

promote excellence in the delivery of natural, cultural, and historical nonpersonal interpretive services. Through the exchange of ideas we increase the level of excellence in our profession.

Guidelines

Deadline

Entries must use the official online entry form and naming system and be submitted by July 31, 2026 in order to be considered eligible.

Participation

To enter you must be an NAI member. If submitting for an Institutional or Commercial membership, your name must be linked to that membership. Only the individual or organization that owns the copyrights or final use of the product may enter. Producers and contractors may submit an item with written permission from the contracting individual or organization.

Eligibility

All entries must be original works made available to the public for the first time between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, unless otherwise noted.

The entry category selected is subject to review and may be changed. If the committee determines another category to be more appropriate, the entrant will be notified of the change. Incomplete or unacceptable entries are nonrefundable and subject to disqualification.

Judging

Entries will be judged by a panel of professionals in the field of interpretation and/or media development. Entrants will receive a copy of judges' evaluation forms.

Volunteer

If you're interested in becoming a judge or serving on the media awards committee, please contact: Samantha Tableriou, stableriou@gmail.com

Entry Steps

Entries must be submitted digitally. Follow these steps:

- Collect up to ten (10) components you feel best represent your entry. These can be photos, text, scripts, videos, etc.
- Visit the awards website: nai-us.org/MediaAwards
- Login to your account
- Pay the appropriate entry fee (see schedule below)
- Fill out the form and upload your documents
- To allow yourself the opportunity to continue to work, be sure to save your entry. You do not need to complete your entry in one sitting.
- Once complete, click "Finish" to submit your completed entry. You cannot make changes once you've submitted.

Interpretive Media Awards Judging Rubric

Scoring Scale

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
Performance Level	Needs Improvement	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Strong	Exemplary

Interpretation

This entry exhibits outstanding application of interpretive principles.

Criteria	Description
Relate	The entry relates to something within the experience of the audience (i.e. universal concepts).
Provoke	The entry speaks to curiosity and retaining interest.
Reveal	The entry focuses on larger ideas rather than simply providing information.
Art	The entry has visual and/or auditory appeal.
Whole	The entry is organized around a theme.

Message & Design

The entry communicates its intended message effectively through an appropriate design.

Criteria	Description
Purpose	The entry serves a clear purpose according to the mission of the site.
Meaning	The entry helps the audience discover meaning about the topic by linking tangibles and intangibles.
Appropriate	The entry is appropriate for the intended audience, the location, the resource, and the agency.
Organized	The entry is organized in a logical, easy-to-follow format (introduction-bridge-body-conclusion).

Media

This entry utilizes effective media principles to support its interpretive message.

Criteria	Description
Medium	The entry's medium (i.e. video, sign, brochure) is appropriate for the subject and audience.
Accessible	The entry is accessible to a wide range of audiences (i.e. non-English speakers, people with disabilities, children, etc).
Quality	The media in this entry is of high quality.

Evaluation Criteria

To support NAI's purpose of "inspiring leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession," entries will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- The entry exhibits outstanding application of interpretive principles.
- The entry communicates its intended message most effectively and in an appropriate manner.
- The entry engages users through effective use of art and technology.

Entry Fees

Fees are commensurate with membership levels and are as follows:

- Commercial Plus: One (1) complimentary entry, then \$25/entry
- Commercial Standard: \$25/entry
- Institution/Consultant: \$75/entry
- Professional: \$120/entry

An entry may be submitted in more than one category. Each category entry is evaluated independently and requires a separate entry fee.

Note: A limited number of fee waivers are available for nonprofit groups or organizations at financial disadvantage. Please contact Heather Manier, heather@nai-us.org, for more information.

Awards

First-, second-, and third-place awards may be designated for each category. However, for any category, a minimum of five (5) eligible entries must be received before the entries will be evaluated. No awards will be given for entries in any category having fewer than five submissions.

Language

Entries in languages other than English must include an English translation. For specific translation requirements, please contact Heather Manier (heather@nai-us.org).

Thematic Series

If an entry is part of a thematically linked series intended to be used collectively (e.g., a sequence of interpretive panels), the entire series should be submitted as one entry. Individual entries from a series and multiple entries taken from a single design template (e.g., a series of posters whose content varies, but whose structure is identical) will not be considered.

If the entry is part of a phased multi-year installation, the submission must either supply adequate contextual information (including photos or sketches) to provide perspective on the entry's role in the larger exhibit, or the entire series should be submitted as one entry after final installation.

Notification

All entrants will receive an email regarding receipt and status of entries. Finalists will be announced at the national conference. Winners will be announced at a virtual ceremony.

Categories

Interior Exhibit

An exhibit designed for interior use, interpreting natural, cultural or historical resources, events, processes, and/or the mission or activities of a resource-based agency or organization. Traveling and trailer-mounted exhibits should be entered in this category. Supporting information should include images showing general location, close-up(s) of the entire exhibit, a brief written description of the exhibit, and readable text/graphics.

Digital Media

A digital interpretive product such as an audio tour, DVD, handheld device, website, mobile app, social media page, video, or podcast. Submission must be digital and may include audio, video, interactive, and/or animated components. A multi-media product designed for educational use, whether stand-alone or as part of an educational curriculum, will be accepted if it is clear it has broad public applicability and works as a stand-alone experience. Campaigns and series that were published during the eligibility window that demonstrate a clear interpretive focus may also be entered in this category. Audiovisual products interpreting a resource, site, facility, event, or organization/agency, including products designed for download, broadcast use and/or available for purchase are eligible. To submit a video, provide a link where entries can be downloaded or streamed for viewing. Supporting information should include a link where the entry can be viewed or streamed, a brief written description of the project and its interpretive goals, and any relevant screenshots or images.

Outdoor Exhibit

An on-site, outdoor exhibit that interprets the significance of a natural or cultural site, resource, process, event, or activity. Supporting information should include image(s) of the site being interpreted, close-up image(s) of the entire exhibit, brief written description of the exhibit, and readable text/graphics.

Print Media

A publication in any printed format that introduces or orients a visitor to an interpretive site or regional route, and/or to activities and experiences available within it, including trail guides, Junior Ranger publications, newsletters, and other publications. Eligible print media includes site publications, books, brochures, campaigns, hand-outs, magazines, maps, and interpretive designs that were made available in printed format. Supporting information should include images of the publication, close-up images showing readable text and graphics, and a brief written description of the project and its interpretive goals

APPLY HERE

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