ClearMark Awards
Preparing Your Submission

Jeffrey Greer, Ph.D., Vice Chair

What we'll cover today

- About the ClearMark awards

- Award categories

- Judging criteria

- How to enter

- Q&A

About the ClearMark Awards

What are ClearMark Awards?

- The ClearMark Awards set a high standard for clarity and simplicity
- Recognizes English and Spanish content created by North American companies, governments and organizations
- Provides useful feedback that helps submitters rework and improve their content
- Celebrates Award winners with a big party and workshop
- This year: May 8, 2018 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Four reasons to enter

1. Earn recognition for great content

2. Get useful feedback from plain language experts

3. Attend a fun awards party

4. Support the Center for Plain Language

Award Levels

Grand Award

Category Winner

Award of Distinction

Award Categories

Two languages

- English
- Spanish
- Tip: If you submit both an English and Spanish entry, please submit one form for each language.
  - Get a discount for your second entry.

Why did we change the categories?

- Makes it easier for submitters

- Evens the amount of submissions in each category

- Aligns with the good work plain language experts like you are doing

- Focuses on digital

Our New Categories

- Digital – Websites
- Digital – Apps and Microsites
- Digital – Emails and Newsletters
- Letters and Correspondence
- Posters, Charts and Fliers
- Infographics
- Brochures – Up to 10 pages
- Brochures – More than 10 pages
- Legal Documents
- Forms, Applications and Statements
- Before and After – Digital
- Before and After – Print

Digital – Websites

- Meant for websites with 21 or more pages

Tips:

- Select five pages for judges to focus on

- Pick pages that reflect your strategy

- Choose usable, helpful content

Digital – Apps and Microsites

- Microsites: Smaller websites, up to 20 pages
- Apps can be in a website, or standalone
  - An app can be a tool such as a wizard or interactive advisor. It can be on a website, phone or computer.
- Tips:
  - Judges cannot install apps
  - Provide an emulator version of a phone/computer app
  - Select five screens for judges to focus on
  - Pick pages that reflect your strategy
  - Choose usable, helpful content

Digital – Emails and Newsletters

- Any email messages or digital newsletters
- It's okay if there's also a print version
- No length requirement

Tips:

- Choose five examples
- Provide links or PDF
- Put all messages into one PDF file

Letters and Correspondence

- Any printed letters or correspondence that happens through the mail

- No length requirements

Posters, Charts and Fliers

- This category is primarily print
- Uses information design and copy to tell a story

Tips:

- Submit as standalone items or as a group
- If you submit as a group, make sure to tell us about the context of your project or campaign

Infographics

- Visual representations that use data visualization and copy to tell a story

- Can be submitted as standalone pieces or a group

Brochures – Up to 10 pages / More than 10 pages

- Print or digital brochures up to 10 pages

- Best to submit as PDF

- Examples:
    - Insurance "Summary of Benefits"
    - Health plan summaries
    - Workplace policies and procedures

Legal Documents

- Regulations, contracts, leases, privacy statements, jury instructions, or other documents addressing primarily legal issues

- Examples:
  - Terms and Conditions
  - Explanations of Benefits
  - Bankruptcy Forms

Before and After Categories

- Before and After - Print

- Before and After - Digital

- Tips:
  - We want to hear about your transformation.
  - Help us understand what you did.
  - Submit samples of before and after.

Video

- We don't accept standalone videos

- We do consider videos as part of a digital entry

- For the best results:
  - Please include a transcript for any video you want us to review.

Who should enter?

Plain language communicators who

- Wrote or substantially improved a communication for consumers
- Published between 2015 to 2017
- Published in North America

You should attend the ceremony to receive your award.

Don't enter if:

- You entered the same or a similar document last year. (You can re-enter substantially changed documents.)
- You've won your category in the last two years.

Common Questions

Can I enter if ...

… I'm a contractor who created a document on behalf of a client or government agency?

… I work for an American organization creating documents for people outside the U.S.?

… I work for a global organization creating documents for people in the U.S.?

How much does it cost?

Entry fees per entry, payable by credit card:

Non-members	$210
Government/Non-profit	$175
Members	$130

A shameless plug for membership

For $210, you can

- Submit one entry at the non-member rate of $210

or

- Become a member ($50) and enjoy a year of benefits
- Submit your entry ($130)
- The total cost is $180. You'll save $30.

Judging Criteria

Based on international Plain Language definition

How are winners picked?

Grand Award

Category Winner

Award of Distinction

Head Judges and Category Leads select

Panels of 2-4 judges review, score, and select winners
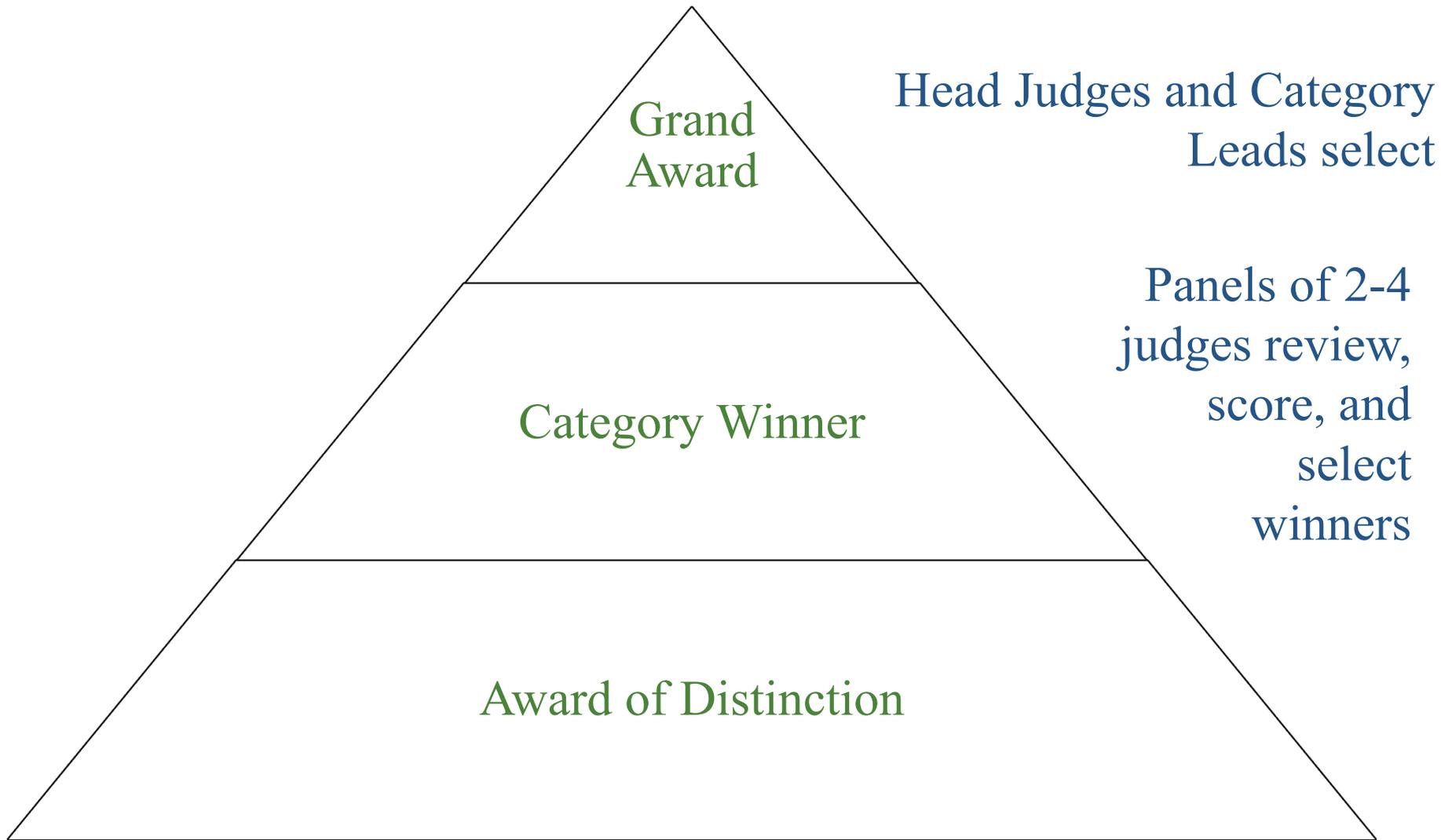
What judges do …

1. Attend several orientation calls

2. Review 6 to 15 entries in a single, specialty category

3. Score and rank entries based on judging criteria

4. Collaborate with other judges to select Awards of Distinction and category winners

5. Provide brief written feedback on each entry

The total commitment is from 10 to 30 hours.

If you're interested in becoming a judge, email us at awards@centerforplainlanguage.org.

The scoring scale and its distribution

1   **Needs Work** – Something that misses the mark

2   **Improving** – Uses some, but misses most of the principles of plain language

3   **Average** – Competent example of plain language

4   **Above Average** – Not much room to improve

5   **Excellent** – Thought-provoking and inspiring example of plain language that masters all of the principles

Scoring: Understanding audience needs

- Is it clear what the audience should learn or do using this entry?

- Are the writing, tone and presentation appropriate for the audience?

- Did you get the sense the writers genuinely want the audiences who use this product to succeed?

Scoring: Style or voice

- Do the writers follow plain writing principles (for example, short sentences with active voice)?

- Does the content feel credible and sincere?

- Do the tone, choice of words and conversational style convey respect for the target audience?

- Do they avoid jargon?

Scoring: Structure and content

- Are the sections clearly organized and labeled?

- Do the labels help audiences predict what is in each section?

- Do the writers create effective transitions between sentences, paragraphs and sections?

- Is the content presented in an order that tells a story or helps audiences complete a task?

- Do they convey key content while effectively winnowing unnecessary details?

- Do the writers provide relevant information in a balanced way, without overselling or underselling their points?

Scoring: Information design and navigation

- Do the typography, color and whitespace grab and guide the reader's attention?

- Do the layout and presentation make it easy to scan?

- Can you tell by glancing where the important information or action is?

- (For websites) Does the navigation offer a visible, guided path through the content?

Scoring: Pictures, graphics and charts

- Do the pictures, graphics or charts map to and support the content?

- Will audiences understand the point of the chart or graph?

- Do the visuals help audiences understand important points better or guide them on how to take important steps?

Conversely:

- Are the images and graphics included merely as decoration? Or would the product be easier to understand if the writers had chosen more or different graphics?

Scoring: Evaluation

- Were the evaluation methods appropriate considering who and how many will use the product and its importance to their well-being?

- Were the right evaluation methods (such as surveys, usability tests or focus groups) used at the right time? Was there an explanation of why they chose those evaluation methods?

- Was the evaluation done with representative audiences?

- Were the findings used to shape and improve the final version?

Scoring: Overall

- Can the target audience find, understand and act confidently using what they learn in this entry?

- Does it help the organization achieve its business goals (for example, increased customer self-service, enhanced mission, better consumer decisions)?

- Is this an example of effective plain writing and information design?

How to Enter

Entry form

- Nominator and contact information

- Owner or publishing organization and contact information

- Category

- Title

- Publication date

- What the entry is trying to communicate (4000 characters)

- Who your target audience is (1000 characters)

- What constraints you worked under (2000 characters)

- How you evaluated the entry (4000 characters)

- The impact or benefit of using plain language (2000 characters)

- Upload or point to your document

- Commitment to participate in the award ceremony

Tools to help

Information and entry form:

centerforplainlanguage.org/submit/

1. Scoring criteria
2. Entry worksheet (Word doc)
3. Sample entry
4. Previous winners
5. This webinar

Tips

- Proofread

- Tell your story – Everyone who enters writes in plain language. Make it **your** story.
  - How is your entry different? Innovative? An example others will want to use?

- Prove it – If you can, quantify the impact your writing had for your audience and organization.
  - If you can't quantify, describe the qualitative impact.

How to enter

Information and entry form:

centerforplainlanguage.org/submit/

Note: This page includes a Word document you can use to plan and get preapproval for your entry, if your organization requires it. You'll need to copy and paste the information from the pre-approval form to the entry form.

Entries accepted: Jan. 1-31, 2018

Q&A

Thank you!

If you have questions, please contact us:

awards@centerforplainlanguage.org

Look for an invitation to our awards party:

- Tuesday May 8, 2018
- National Press Club, Washington, DC
- Afternoon workshop with Kristina Halvorson, CEO Brain Traffic and Confab Events
- Stay tuned for discounted package including workshop and awards dinner

centerforplainlanguage.org
Dec. 8, 2017