2026 Sponsorship Marketing Awards Categories

Program Award Categories:

Arts, Music & Culture

The best arts, music and culture sponsorships earn a genuine place in the cultural moment, deepening the audience's bond with both the art and the brand. How did the program add real value to the cultural experience and the audience around it? Case writers: tell us how the partnership enriched the arts property and its audience, and what the brand earned in return.

Best New Initiative

A standout first-year program proves its thesis fast, turning a fresh idea into measurable impact in its very first cycle of execution. What made this work in year one, with no playbook to follow and everything to prove? Case writers: tell us the bet the program made, why it made it, and what the first year revealed about its potential.

Best New Innovation

New capabilities like AI, immersive tech, data and emerging platforms arrive faster than most brands can act on them, and the winning program turns a novel tool into real sponsorship advantage. What made this innovation more than a gimmick, and how did it unlock value the brand couldn't reach any other way? Case writers: tell us what was genuinely new here, and how the technology served the partnership.

DE&I

The strongest DEI sponsorships use the platform to create real opportunity, representation and lasting change for the communities they champion. How did the program advance equity in a way that was brave, credible and built to outlast a single campaign? Case writers: tell us how the work connected to deeper organizational commitments, and what tangible change it created beyond the activation itself.

Festivals, Fairs, and Annual Events

A great event or festival sponsorship turns a moment in time into a brand experience people carry long after the gates close. How did the program forge a real connection with the audience in a crowded, high-energy environment? Case writers: tell us how the program elevated the event experience and what it delivered for the brand.

Multicultural

Canada is multicultural, and the best programs turn genuine cultural insight into partnerships and activations that connect authentically with the communities they celebrate. How did the program use cultural understanding to build a credible, resonant connection with multicultural audiences? Case writers: tell us how cultural insight shaped the choice of property and the activation, and what the program earned with the community it set out to reach.

Olympics / FIFA

The Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup are milestone moments on the global stage, uniting audiences around the world and giving brands a rare chance to be part of history. How did the program rise to the scale of the moment and turn the world's attention into a lasting connection for the brand? Case writers: tell us how the activation made the most of one of sport's biggest global stages and what it delivered for the brand. *(Note: entries here are precluded from the Professional Sports categories.)*

Professional Sports - $500K and Below

A great sub-$500K professional sports sponsorship turns limited resources into outsized fan connection through sharp strategy and creativity. How did the program stand out in the category and punch above its weight despite being outspent? Case writers: tell us the budget and resource challenges the program faced and how smart strategy overcame them. *(Note: budget of the campaign excludes sponsor rights fees.)*

Professional Sports - $501K and Above

At the top end of professional sports sponsorship, ambition is expected, and the winning program converts a major investment into fan connection that justifies every dollar. How did the program turn scale and spend into genuine fandom and measurable impact? Case writers: tell us how the investment translated into results for the brand and the property. *(Note: budget of the campaign excludes sponsor rights fees.)*

Purpose-Led/Social Cause

The most powerful cause sponsorships change minds, shift behaviour and move an issue forward in a crowded and competitive space. What insight gave the cause its edge, and how did

the program turn intent into measurable change? Case writers: tell us what the program set out to change, the insight behind the strategy, and the difference it made.

Regional

A great regional program is built for its place, drawing on local insight and identity to connect deeply with a specific community. How did the program earn its relevance in the region and prove that local focus drives real impact? Case writers: tell us how regional insight shaped the work and what it achieved for the brand in that market. *(Note: must be a dedicated regional campaign, not part of a national program.)*

Sustained Success

Sustained success is the hardest thing to manufacture in sponsorship, proven by a program that has delivered measurable year-over-year growth and results across three or more consecutive years. What kept the program growing season after season, expanding its programming, diversification or participation year after year? Case writers: tell us how the program grew across three or more years, and the year-over-year results in programming, diversification or participation that prove its staying power. *(Note: must be a program that has been in the market for three or more years).*

Talent / Ambassador

A great talent or ambassador program turns a person's influence, whether an athlete, celebrity, media personality, creator or other influencer, into authentic connection and real value for the brand. How did the program use that influence to build a credible, resonant connection with the audience? Case writers: tell us why the talent or ambassador was the right fit, how the partnership came to life in activation, and what it delivered for the brand.

Recognition Award Categories

Agency of the Year

The Agency of the Year sets the standard for our discipline, delivering strategically ambitious, brilliantly activated sponsorship work across its roster. What made this agency's body of work the benchmark for the industry this year? Case writers: show us the breadth, ambition and results of the agency's year, and how it moved the industry forward.

Property of the Year

The Property of the Year is the partner brands most want to be associated with, turning its platform into measurable value for sponsors and fans alike. What made this property the most valuable partner in the market this year? Case writers: show us how the property delivered for its partners this year and why it stands above the rest.

Hall of Fame, Individual

This honour recognizes an individual whose impact on Canadian sponsorship will benefit the industry for years to come. What is the legacy that sets this person apart in the history of the discipline? Case writers: tell us the work, the leadership and the lasting mark this person has left on sponsorship in Canada.