

HONOURS & AWARDS



How to Write a Compelling Nomination

Who deserves an honour or an award?

British Columbia's medal and recognition programs celebrate the people who make our province a better place to live.

The programs acknowledge outstanding achievements in education, health care, business, science and technology, community service, the arts, and many other fields.

There are always fewer honours and awards than people who deserve them. Because receiving honours and awards are so rare, they are reserved for people:

- who have achieved excellence in their field and/or made significant, observable changes or accomplishments;
- whose work has benefited the people of British Columbia or anywhere in the world in their field or activity.

If you think your nominee demonstrates these criteria and that their contribution stands out from other people's, please consider nominating them for one of our medal and recognition programs.

How do I write a compelling nomination?

In order for your nomination to stand out amongst the many others we receive, you must explain and include evidence and clear examples of what makes your nominee so exceptional.

Don't just say your nominee is outstanding – prove it!

It's important to use specific and concrete examples to illustrate how your nominee meets each of the eligibility and award criteria. Provide examples of how your nominee has demonstrated outstanding character and is a deserving candidate for the honour or award.

Show how they have:

- encouraged and exemplified the virtue of good citizenship;
- touched or enriched the lives of others, particularly those who are vulnerable or less able to help themselves;
- shown ongoing initiative, leadership and dedication;
- devoted themselves to sustained and selfless voluntary service;
- earned the respect of their peers and become a role model in their field;
- demonstrated innovation or creativity in delivering lasting results.

A compelling nomination should also describe as vividly and precisely as possible the difference your nominee's contribution has made and show why it has been important. Include details such as:

- how were things before the achievement;
- what knowledge your nominee had of the situation and what actions they choose to take;
- the scale of the achievement and whether it is completed or ongoing;
- the achievement's sustainability and impact on the community or province and how it has enriched the lives of others;
- what made this an outstanding achievement – indicate any extraordinary circumstances or challenges the nominee faced (include statistics or historical background if applicable);
- what makes your nominee different from others doing the same thing?

Here is an actual citation that illustrates how a nominee has demonstrated outstanding character and meets many of the criteria mentioned above:

“He has made a measurable impact over the past 10 years as a passionate advocate for all those afflicted with cancer, especially British Columbians. His volunteer activities are as varied as his skills, and they include: working with new patients to help them understand and overcome the fear of their diagnoses; assisting new patients with understanding the administrative nuances of the medical system in British Columbia; public speaking about the benefits of cancer research in British Columbia; and simply acting like a friend to those who are most in need of one... He has also directly and personally raised more than \$250,000 for cancer research as a participant in an annual cycling event. He has also frequently been asked to speak at presentations to the Vancouver business community as well as to appear as the subject of a variety of media-related fundraising material – each of which has encouraged thousands and thousands of other financial contributions to cancer research in British Columbia... His contribution to others becomes all the more impressive when you consider the many personal health challenges that he himself has endured over the years.”

It is achievements and effects of this kind and scale that deserve an honour or award and that will convince a selection panel to consider your nominee. For more examples of strong citations, visit the last section of this guide.

Give different perspectives - don't tell the same story three times!

In addition to the description of the achievement, we also require testimonial letters from two individuals (other than the nominator) who support the nomination. These testimonial letters are an integral part of the nomination process, since they help to paint a complete picture of your nominee and what they have accomplished.

The testimonial letters should:

- be written by individuals who know the nominee well enough to be able to talk about the impact of their achievement from first-hand experience;
- be current and written specifically for the honour or award you are nominating for;
- provide various examples from a range of views and perspectives.

The testimonial letters should not:

- simply state that the authors support the nomination – they need to provide more information about the nominee and their achievement.

Here is an example of three actual citations written about the same nominee, each from a different perspective:

“I was quite impressed by her maturity and dedication at the tender age of eleven. She is now 17, still visits us on a regular basis and has [organized] numerous fundraising events for the CNIB on behalf of our daughter.” – Parent

“I have never, in 36 years of teaching, encountered a young person so prepared to immediately assume a leadership role when a need arises.” – Teacher

“She has truly inspired me to become more involved in the community, reach out to those who are not as privileged as ourselves, and share our talents with those around us in order to make a positive change in our community and our world. I am merely one of the many lives that she has influenced throughout her daily life.” – Fellow Student and Friend

Note: It is often perceived that a testimonial letter written by an influential or high-profile individual will automatically give it more weight; however this is not the case if the letter does not specifically address the nominee's merits.

Keep it simple.

Remember that longer doesn't necessarily mean better. When presenting your nominee, keep your explanations clear and to the point while ensuring there is enough information for the selection panel to make their decision.

How do I find the right words to present my nominee?

Strong nominations will often include persuasive nouns such as:

- determination
- drive
- innovation
- impact
- visionary
- pioneer
- commitment
- sustainability
- creativity
- mentor
- teamwork
- hidden hero
- respect
- recognition
- selflessness
- performance
- leadership
- role model

adjectives such as:

- trusted
- dedicated
- persuasive
- resourceful
- persevering
- unflustered
- positive
- generous
- inspirational
- passionate
- enthusiastic
- sympathetic
- supportive
- articulate
- conscientious
- incomparable
- exemplary
- fair
- admired
- vibrant
- diligent

and phrases such as:

- making a difference
- succeeding against the odds
- going over and above
- mentor and role model
- overcoming obstacles.

What shouldn't I do?

Selection panels evaluate nominees' merits based on the information provided to them. That is why only the strongest and most compelling nominations often result in an honour or an award.

There must be enough convincing information in the nomination package to make a good case. Therefore your nomination should not be:

- an extended CV or resume;
- a list of educational achievements or transcripts;
- a list of appointments, awards or posts;
- a job description showing what the person has been hired to do.

Because weaker nominations often list these things, a regular complaint from selection panels is that the nominee was “simply doing their job” or “nothing exceptional was demonstrated”.

Instead, you should describe what is outstanding about your nominee’s achievements and show memorably and persuasively how and where they have made a difference.

Ready to nominate?

We hope that you have found this guide useful. If you are now ready to nominate someone:

- [Visit our website](#) and click on the program you’re interested in.
- Download the appropriate nomination form for that program.
- Read the eligibility criteria and instructions carefully.
- Prepare in advance and give yourself (and your testimonial letter writers) lots of time to complete the nomination package before the deadline.
- Fill out the form and gather your testimonial letters as well as any additional materials, if applicable.
- Submit your nomination package before the deadline. Instructions for submitting your nomination online or by post can be found on the website.
- Remember that nominations are accepted all year, so if you miss the current deadline, eligible nominations will be considered in the following year.

Questions?

If you have any questions or require additional information, please [visit our website](#) or contact us:

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How to Write Nominations – Some Examples

Here are some disguised examples from persuasive citations:

“He organized the Student Activist Association to reach out to other newcomer students and his desire was to give an opportunity to newcomer students to experience community engagement in Canada to gain their self-esteem and confidence. I was impressed by his altruism in promoting social justice issues in a broader level and engage many newcomer students who are marginalized in the school. I consider this initiative as a tangible step where he created a framework and a forum for marginalized students to get involved and it has a lasting impact. This is very important since our school is home to a diverse student population.”

- This nominee has taken the initiative to do something to help his community. He has identified a need and started something from scratch to make things better for others, and his work has had a lasting impact on his peers, his school and his community.

“Her roots run deep as a newcomer who fled Honduras after her husband’s disappearance, torture and murder. From this tumultuous beginning as a refugee in Canada, she has made a commitment to ease the transition for newcomers to Canada... Her 21-year tenure at the health centre has afforded much success in welcoming, supporting, advocating, and mentoring new arrivals to Canada. She spearheaded the Multicultural Health Department at the health centre, when there was no avenue for newcomers to access primary care. Her department provided cultural interpretation services and peer support to newcomers from several countries looking to settle in her area. Over the years, her work has contributed to the successful transition of thousands of families and individuals.”

- This nominee has touched and enriched the lives of newcomers, who are particularly vulnerable when they first arrive in Canada. Her initiatives have demonstrated lasting results and impacted thousands of individuals in her community.

“Once she moved on to high school, her commitment to raising funds and awareness on behalf of CNIB continued through an organization she founded... In her junior year, she announced her ambitious intention of organizing an annual school gala...CNIB received a cheque for \$2,000 as a result of this event, which is a tremendous contribution... She and two of her friends offered to volunteer their time at our one-week summer camp for [blind] children in 2009 and 2010, putting in over 70 hours each... I would estimate that she has completed approximately 600 hours [of voluntarism] over 6 years (including direct time spent and time she has spent organizing events to raise funds and awareness...”

- This nominee clearly exemplifies the virtue of good citizenship and has gone over and above simply volunteering her time with a charitable organization. She has shown exemplary initiative and leadership skills by founding a group within her school to raise funds and awareness and organizing numerous fundraising activities and events. Her dedication and achievement has been impressive (with 600+ hours of service) and ongoing (for over 6 years).

“She set about fundraising for a children’s orphanage in South Africa, one of the worst-hit countries in the AIDS epidemic. In 2004, she visited and volunteered for a month at the orphanage. Disregarding the risk of infection for herself, she fed and comforted the babies and children with a human warmth that few of them would have otherwise experienced.”

- This nominee is voluntarily helping others beyond her community and in doing so has helped and made life better for many who are vulnerable.

“She has subtly and effectively altered the face of Canadian literary culture over a period of 59 years. First, she was a potent force in fostering the study of Canadian literature in high school and university courses during the late 50s and early 60s, before it was regarded an acceptable field for serious study. Second, in 1975, she co-founded an academic journal which established Canadian criticism of Canadian children’s authors, helping this fledging field develop. Third, she has changed how we read early Canadian women writers – especially L.M. Montgomery, who is now seen, thanks to [the nominee’s] work, as a powerful international influence. Finally, she has served as a role model and mentor for several generations of Canadian women who aspired to professional careers. There is no question that she has made a huge difference in many aspects of what now constitutes Canadian “literary history”, as well as in broader aspects of Canadian culture. She has always been British Columbia based, but her work ranged far beyond.”

- This nominee has achieved excellence in her field of work and made significant, observable changes to the Canadian literary landscape. She has broken many barriers and touched and enriched the lives of many generations of Canadian writers by serving as a role model and mentor. The scope of her work has extended beyond the province and influenced writers and scholars at an international level.

“When she was in Grade 10 history class, she openly discussed her Metis heritage with her classmates. Because she is such a positive role model, this created a ripple effect among our Native Communities. Many parents chose to send their children to [our school] even though we are not their home school... Due to the increase of [our school’s] Native population, we have developed a strong bond with our Native Cultural Resource Centre... Her recent work with “Residential School Experience has enriched the Grade 10 Canadian History curriculum. She has actively researched documents and resources that would support the curriculum. She has graciously donates these to the school, leaving a legacy of information and support for future Native students.”

- This nominee has inspired her entire community through her pride in her heritage. Her initiative to learn more about her culture and share these learnings with her peers and teachers has directly influenced the curriculum that is now being taught in her school and created strong ties with the local Native cultural resource centre. This nominee has left a lasting, sustainable legacy within her school, the Native community and the community at large.