

Heritage Excellence Awards 2026 Guidelines

OREGON HERITAGE COMMISSION, OREGON HERITAGE

The Oregon Heritage Excellence Awards recognize individuals, organizations and projects for outstanding heritage preservation efforts in Oregon, drawing public attention to these efforts, and raising the quality of heritage-oriented activities. Awards will be presented during the 2026 Oregon Heritage Conference April 29-May 2 in Woodburn. The awards are presented by Oregon Heritage, a division of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department that houses the Oregon Heritage Commission and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

The Oregon Heritage Excellence Awards honor those that have made the most of available resources and skills and are given for exceptional and meritorious work by organizations or individuals. Nominations are encouraged for organizations and projects of all sizes and heritage purposes and for volunteers and professionals from all heritage sectors. The Sally Donovan Award for Historic Cemeteries will specifically be awarded for excellence in work preserving Oregon historic cemeteries. In 2022 the Standout Heritage Volunteer category was added and is the only non-competitive category.

Action over and above the ordinary call of duty is an award prerequisite. Special consideration is given to the development of new ideas, approaches and innovations. The mere fulfillment of routine functions does not justify an award. Previous award winners will be honored a second time only if their new work represents a major improvement above the level for which they were previously honored. View past award winners and projects [here](#).

Awards timeline

- **Deadline:** January 22, 2026, 11:59 p.m.
- **Information Session:** Dec. 2, 2025, 1-2pm. [Register here](#).
- **Notification:** Mid-February
- **Awards presentation event:** April 29, 2026, during the 2026 Oregon Heritage Conference in Woodburn

Categories & selection process

- **Competitive Categories:** Individual, Organization, Project, and the Sally Donovan Award for Historic Cemeteries
- **Non-Competitive Category:** Standout Heritage Volunteer

Criteria and nomination for each of the categories are outlined in the next section of this document. For competitive categories, the award selection committee will review each nomination based on the category criteria and may award multiple nominations or none from each category based on the application information.

How to submit a nomination

Nominations will be submitted online using our grant application system:

- Instructions for the online application process: <https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/OH/pages/awards.aspx#one>
- Apply on our grant application system: <https://oprdgrants.org/>

For more information

Contact Katie Henry, Oregon Heritage Commission Coordinator, at katie.henry@oprd.oregon.gov or 503-877-8834



Heritage Excellence Awards

CRITERIA & NOMINATION INFORMATION

Below are the award categories and the criteria, nomination, and supporting material specific to each category. Please note that there are four competitive categories (Individual, Organization, Project, and the Sally Donovan Award for Historic Cemeteries) and one non-competitive category (Standout Heritage Volunteer).

CATEGORY <i>Nominations must fit one of these categories</i>	CRITERIA <i>The criteria for each category are used by the awards committee when evaluating nominations</i>	NOMINATION <i>The nomination form will ask these questions based on the category chosen</i>	SUPPORTING MATERIAL <i>Supporting material is strongly encouraged with the nomination. This material could include the following for each category</i>
INDIVIDUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For exceptional, meritorious and extraordinary work over an extended period or at the conclusion of a distinguished career. This work must be on behalf of Oregon heritage and raising the quality of heritage-oriented activities. • For action above and beyond the ordinary call of duty. • Special consideration given for development of new ideas, approaches and innovations. The mere fulfillment of routine functions does not justify an award. • Have made the most of available resources and skills. • Previous award winners will be honored a second time only if their new work represents a major improvement above the level for which they were previously honored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What heritage activities has the individual taken part in? Describe the individual's role. • How has the individual gone above and beyond the ordinary call of duty? How have their efforts exceeded those of others in the organization or community? • How have the individual's activities improved the organization and the community? • How has the individual made the most of available resources and skill? • Did the individual utilize any new ideas, approaches or innovations? Please describe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to three letters of critical testimony or support. Letters should be from individuals or organizations that have substantial knowledge of the accomplishments of the person being nominated. • Samples of and/or documentation of the individual's work or works. • The individual's resume or curriculum vitae. • Photographs showing the nominated person and demonstrating their work. Digital photographs are preferred.
ORGANIZATION <i>This includes nonprofits, private businesses, coalitions/formalized networks, Federal/State/Local Govt., Boards/Commissions/Committees, divisions, departments, work groups, etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For exceptional, meritorious and extraordinary work over an extended period on behalf of Oregon heritage and raising the quality of heritage-oriented activities. • For action over and above the ordinary call of duty. • Special consideration is given to the development of new ideas, approaches and innovations. The mere fulfillment of routine functions does not justify an award. • Makes the most of available resources and skills. • Previous award winning organizations will be honored a second time only if new work represents a major improvement above the level for which the organization was previously honored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the organization's mission and main focus? Describe its programs, staff, and audience/market. • How has the organization or business gone above and beyond the ordinary call of duty? Outline the projects and activities of the organization or business related to heritage. • How does the organization or business benefit, respect and preserve the local community and its heritage? • How has the organization or business made the most of available resources and skill? • Were any new ideas, approaches or innovations used by the organization or business? Please describe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of programs, exhibits, projects, publications, and website, as appropriate. • Copies of the organization's last two annual reports, strategic plan, or other documentation that shows the organization's accomplishment both financially and programmatically. • Resumes of key personnel. • Up to three letters of critical testimony or support from those not affiliated with the organization, but who have substantial knowledge of the organization's activities and how the activities benefit, respects and preserves the local community and its heritage. • Photographs showing the nominee's activities. Digital photographs are preferred.

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PROJECT <i>Projects must either have been started and completed between Jan. 1, 2024 and Dec. 31, 2025 or for long term projects, completed or achieved major milestones that fulfill the criteria between Jan. 1, 2024-Dec. 31, 2025.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For exceptional and meritorious work by organizations, businesses or individuals on behalf of Oregon heritage and raising the quality of heritage-oriented activities. • For action over and above the ordinary call of duty. • The development of new ideas, approaches and innovations. • Make the most of available resources and skills, and accomplish a high degree of authenticity. • Mere fulfillment of routine functions does not justify an award. For example, building preservation projects must exhibit a high degree of conservation or restoration of original design and materials, with an emphasis on authenticity. A preservation project that involves considerable new design, materials and construction, though perhaps meritorious as an adaptive-use project, will likely not meet this standard of authentic preservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the project’s goals, objectives, and final products? • What are roles of the various participants involved? • How does the project benefit, respect, and preserve the community and its heritage? • How has this project made the most of available resources and skills, while accomplishing a high level of authenticity. • Were any unique challenges and/or unusual obstacles faced during the project? Describe any new ideas, approaches, and innovations used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to three letters of critical testimony or support. The letters should be from individuals not affiliated with the project, but who have substantial knowledge of the activities being nominated. The letters may address the quality of the work; any new ideas, approaches, and innovations made to complete the project; and how it benefits, respects and preserves the local community and its heritage. • Resumes or curricula vitae of key personnel. • Samples of and/or documentation of the project including brochures, publications, progress reports, websites, etc. • Photographs showing project work and the completed project. Digital photographs are preferred.
SALLY DONOVAN AWARD FOR HISTORIC CEMETERIES <i>The recipient of this award will receive \$500. This award and fund was established by Bruce Howard, in the name of Sally Donovan. One award is given per cycle to an individual, organization or project.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For individual and organization nominations, exceptional, meritorious and extraordinary work over an extended period of time. This work must be on behalf of historic cemeteries and raising the quality of historic cemeteries activities. For projects, exceptional and meritorious work by organizations, businesses or individuals on behalf of historic cemeteries and raising the quality of historic cemetery activities. • For action above and beyond the ordinary call of duty. • Special consideration given for development of new ideas, approaches and innovations. • The mere fulfillment of routine functions does not justify an award. • Have made the most of available resources and skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the nature and scope of activities of the individual/organization/project related to preservation of Oregon historic cemeteries. (For individuals include activities related to this work, for organization include information such as mission, program and audience, and for projects include project goals, objectives and final products) • Describe how the individual’s/organization’s/project’s efforts have gone above and beyond the ordinary call of duty. • Did the individual/organization/project utilize any news ideas, approaches or innovations? Please describe. 	Please see Individual, Organization, Project supporting material suggestions above depending on which of those you are nominating for this particular category.

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STANDOUT HERITAGE VOLUNTEER <i>This category recognizes that volunteers are the backbone of heritage preservation work in Oregon and it celebrates those standout volunteers that have contributed their time and skills to help organizations persist and thrive. This is a non-competitive category and volunteers that are nominated will be recognized with a certificate and be included in a compilation video.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one volunteer per heritage organization allowed for nomination. Heritage organizations include any entity doing heritage preservation work in Oregon including but not limited to historic buildings, archaeological sites, museums, archives, historic cemeteries, oral history, main streets, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the impact this volunteer has had on your heritage organization and/or your heritage preservation efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide at least one photo of the volunteer. Digital Photographs are preferred.