



AAPA LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS

Illuminating Excellence in the Port Industry

The **AAPA Lighthouse Awards** celebrate excellence, innovation, and impact across the port industry, recognizing initiatives that strengthen operations, communities, and sustainable growth. These awards illuminate best practices and forward-thinking solutions of ports and industry solution providers (ISPs) in addressing complex challenges, delivering measurable results, and inspiring continuous improvement.

PORT AWARDS

The **Port Awards** recognize excellence across nine specialty areas aligned with the goals of AAPA's Technical Committees, highlighting achievements in port and maritime operations. Most specialty areas include port size designations:

- Small port: fewer than 55 full-time employees (FTEs) and less than \$25 million in annual revenue
- Large port: 55 or more FTEs and \$25 million or more in annual revenue

A port program/project may be submitted in up to two award categories using a single application and fee, with the chosen categories indicated on the application cover. For example, a new cruise terminal could be entered for both the Excellence in Cruise Practices and Construction Practices Awards with one application. If a single program/project is entered in more than two categories (e.g., Environmental Practices, Financial Practices, and Community/Educational Outreach), additional applications and fees are required. Multiple programs/projects from the same port also require separate applications and fees, with each program/project entered in up to two categories.

I. Administration

Excellence in Administrative Practices - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that improve internal operations, workforce culture, and organizational effectiveness. Strong submissions demonstrate measurable improvements in efficiency, transparency, or employee engagement. Examples include process improvements, HR initiatives, training programs, succession planning, or performance systems.

II. Cruise

Excellence in Cruise Practices - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that strengthen relationships with the cruise industry and enhance passenger experience. Strong submissions demonstrate improved operations, services, or passenger satisfaction. Examples include terminal upgrades, passenger flow improvements, partnerships, or service enhancements.

III. Economic Development

Excellence in Economic Development Practices - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that enhance a port's economic impact and competitiveness. Strong submissions demonstrate business growth, trade expansion, or job creation. Examples include asset development, community enhancement, property acquisition, trade facilitation, or strategic partnerships.



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IV. Environment

Excellence in Environmental Practices - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that improve environmental performance and sustainability. Strong submissions demonstrate measurable environmental benefits. Examples include air/water quality improvements, alternative energy, habitat restoration, waste management solutions, or port beautification.

V. Facility and Infrastructure Development

Excellence in Studies, Plans, Designs

Recognizes exemplary efforts in the analysis, planning, and design of port initiatives. Strong submissions demonstrate foresight, technical expertise, and innovative solutions that enhance port assets and improve operational efficiency. Examples include feasibility studies, master/project plans, or architectural and engineering designs.

Excellence in Construction Practices

Recognizes projects that showcase exemplary construction management and delivery practices. Strong submissions demonstrate efficient scheduling, budget management, quality control, risk mitigation, and stakeholder coordination. Examples include port infrastructure and facility projects completed in the past year that showcase advanced construction techniques.

VI. Finance

Excellence in Financial Practices - Small and Large Port

Recognizes excellence in financial management and sustainability. Strong submissions demonstrate innovation in funding, cost efficiency, and risk management. Examples include financing strategies, revenue diversification, budgeting tools, or investment models.

VII. Public Relations/Communications

Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that engage and educate port stakeholders and the broader community. Strong submissions demonstrate meaningful connections, increased awareness, and expanded educational opportunities. Examples include public engagement programs, educational events, stakeholder partnerships/tours, and community outreach activities.

Excellence in Print/Digital Media Communications - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that effectively deliver information and messaging through print and digital media channels. Strong submissions demonstrate clear communication, audience engagement, and measurable impact. Examples include websites, advertisements, social media messaging, digital publications, video storytelling, and other multimedia content.

Excellence in Public Relations (PR) Campaign - Small and Large Port

Recognizes comprehensive public relations campaigns designed to achieve specific goals through strategic planning and targeted outreach. Strong submissions demonstrate a well-defined strategy, coordinated messaging across multiple channels, and measurable results, including clear identification of tactics, audiences, and outcomes. Examples include multi-channel campaigns, issue/crisis communications, advocacy campaigns, rebranding efforts, and stakeholder awareness initiatives.



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VIII. Security

Excellence in Security Practices - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that safeguard personnel, assets, cargo, infrastructure, and the surrounding environment against security threats and risks. Strong submissions demonstrate measurable improvements in security effectiveness, resilience, and collaboration. Examples include Facility Security Plans (FSPs), anti-drone measures, cybersecurity programs, and joint initiatives with the Coast Guard, CISA, or other partner agencies.

IX. Technology

Excellence in Technology Solutions - Small and Large Port

Recognizes initiatives that use technology to address port challenges with innovation, creativity, and leadership. Strong submissions show measurable improvements in efficiency, safety, and overall operations. Examples include digital transformation projects, port operations data systems, cargo tracking and equipment management tools, intelligent transportation systems (ITS), vessel safety solutions, and technologies that improve traffic flow and intermodal freight movement.

NEW! BEACON OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

The **Beacon of Excellence Award** honors the single most impactful port submission across all categories, recognizing outstanding innovation, problem-solving, and measurable results. The top two scoring entries from each Port Awards category are eligible for consideration.

MARITIME INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

The **Maritime Innovator of the Year Award** celebrates exceptional products, technologies, or services by member ISPs that significantly enhance port operations, safety, sustainability, and efficiency. This award recognizes innovations with clear applications, positive outcomes, and relevance to real-world port environments. AAPA will present both a Maritime Innovator of the Year Award and an Award of Achievement to honor vision, creativity, and execution.

Submissions for the Port Awards, Beacon of Excellence Award and the Maritime Innovator of the Year Award will follow the **same application requirements**, ensuring consistency across all categories. Each submission is judged only within its designated categories, even if it includes elements relevant to other specialties, except for the Beacon of Excellence Award, which is evaluated for cross-cutting impact across multiple categories.



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APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Applications must be submitted electronically in Submittable and attachments should be in PDF format by the specified deadline, adhering to the prescribed format and submission requirements. All application should be submitted in English.

Each application entry should include the following elements:

1. A **Submission Form** in Submittable that includes fields for the submittal title (100-character limit); port/ISP name; applicant point of contact, title, and contact information; supporting applicant(s) and contact information; entry award categories; status of the program/project; and a program/project summary (150-word limit).
2. A **Cover Page** that includes the submittal title and photo/graphic, port or company name and logo, supporting applicant(s) names and logos (if applicable), award categories (up to two per entry fee in Port Awards), and entry submittal date. The cover page does not count toward the total page limit.
3. An **Application** that is single-spaced, using a standard 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and does not exceed 15 pages. Detailed reports, analyses, and photographs are not required, although, if available, may be included as an appendix that will not count toward the total page limit. Judges will not be required to review any appendices.

Application Format

The application consists of seven sections, including a non-scoring conclusion, with a total possible score of 100 points. An application must receive a score of at least 70 points to be considered for an award or certificate. Sections 1–5 are the same for all submissions, while Section 6 is different for Port Awards and Maritime Innovator Awards. Port submissions seeking consideration for the Beacon of Excellence Award must also include a 3–5 sentence “Beacon of Excellence” statement describing how the project reflects overall excellence and achieves outcomes that span multiple award categories.

Each application should be organized as follows.

1. Background, Purpose and Goals – 15 points

Briefly describe the port, company and the context for the program, project, or innovation. Include relevant history or prior work, and any research or studies that informed the initiative. Explain the overall purpose, broad goals, and specific objectives of the initiative. *Judges assess clarity, completeness, and how well the goals align with the award category’s focus and relevance of the initiative.*

2. Implementation & Resources – 15 points

Outline how the program, project or innovation was implemented, including methodology, timeline, key activities, and any implementation challenges addressed. Include resources used—financial, human, technological—and note efficiency measures, value engineering, or alternative funding



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mechanisms. *Judges assess thoroughness, feasibility, and effectiveness of implementation, along with efficient and innovative use of resources.*

3. Innovation & Relevance – 25 points

Describe new ideas, approaches, technologies, or practices introduced, and their practical application. Demonstrate how the initiative addresses current challenges or gaps within port operations, infrastructure, or maritime industry needs. *Judges assess creativity, problem-solving, and alignment with industry priorities. For innovations, judges also evaluate practicality, scalability, and potential for setting new standards.*

4. Results, Evidence & Impact – 25 points

Provide quantitative and qualitative evidence of outcomes. Describe short-term and long-term impacts, lessons learned, and benefits to the port or industry.

Judges assess measurable success, tangible and intangible impacts, and overall effectiveness in achieving objectives.

5. Integration, Adaptability & Scalability – 10 points

Explain how the initiative integrates with existing systems, processes, or infrastructure. Describe adaptability to changing conditions, emerging technologies, or evolving port needs, and potential for expansion or replication. *Judges assess flexibility, strategic integration, adaptability to new challenges, and potential for broader application across ports or industry contexts.*

6. Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration – 10 points (Port Awards Only)

Highlight how the initiative involves internal and external stakeholders, community partners, tenants, government entities, or other relevant groups. Describe strategies, collaborative efforts, feedback incorporation, and relationship-building. *Judges assess the depth, quality, and effectiveness of engagement and collaboration, as well as the initiative's ability to create meaningful and lasting relationships.*

6. User Satisfaction – 10 points (Maritime Innovator Awards Only)

Provide evidence of end-user adoption, usability, and benefits. Include testimonials, adoption rates, surveys, or other metrics showing positive impact on users. *Judges assess usability, effectiveness, and user satisfaction, along with alignment with industry priorities.*

7. Conclusion – Non-Scoring

Summarize key achievements, lessons learned, and future plans or recommendations. Highlight the overall significance of the program/project and any unique outcomes or insights. *This section is for context and summary only and does not contribute to the total score. Judges may use it to gain perspective but will focus on the scored sections when evaluating the entry.*