



2026 SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS CATEGORIES & ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

CELEBRATING 32 YEARS!

For the past 32 years, the Loudoun Small Business Awards has honored our community's most outstanding small businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations for their outstanding achievements and contributions to Loudoun's world class quality of life. The information below describes the process, criteria and categories by which the Loudoun Chamber chooses the finalists and winners for this prestigious award.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection committee evaluates your nomination SOLELY on the information you provide. Your answers to the questions are strictly confidential and the supporting materials, along with any presentations you provide, are critical to the evaluation process. The deadline to submit your application & supporting materials is Thursday, August 20, 2026 at 4 p.m.

GENERAL BUSINESS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Annual revenue may not exceed \$12 million.*
- Subsidiaries of another organization are ineligible.*
- Nominees must have a valid business license.
- Total full-time employee count may not exceed 60 at any time during the 12-months immediately prior to August 31, 2026.
- For eligibility purposes, part-time employee counts for one-half of a full-time employee.
- Agricultural businesses may exceed the 60 full-time employee maximum during harvest season (Aug. 1-Oct. 31).
- Past winners are ineligible to compete in the same category for three years.
- Any organization located in Loudoun County is eligible.
- Organization that are located outside of Loudoun County must be a Loudoun Chamber member.
- Businesses must have completed one full year of operation prior to August 31, 2026.

* Local franchise owners are eligible if they meet all other criteria.

* The GovCon category criteria is listed below.

NONPROFIT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Annual budget may not exceed \$12 million.
- Nominees must provide IRS determination letter
- Total employee count may not exceed 60 at any time during the 12 months immediately prior to August 31, 2026.
- For eligibility purposes, part-time employee counts for one-half of a full-time employee.
- Past winners are ineligible to compete in the same category for three years.
- Any organization located in Loudoun County is eligible.
- Organization that are located outside of Loudoun County must be a Loudoun Chamber member.

2026 SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS CATEGORIES

2026 Loudoun Exceptional Entrepreneur of the Year *(separate application)*

Risk-taker. Innovator. Leader. Creator of unique ways to deliver value to customers. These all define our 2026 Exceptional Entrepreneur. Think you deserve this prestigious award? Then demonstrate your exceptional performance in starting and growing a business. Skills we are looking for include product or service development, financial management, capital attraction, marketing, sales growth, strategic planning and customer service.

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Retail & Consumer Service Business of the Year

This award is for businesses that offer superior service to consumers. We are looking for businesses that demonstrate exceptional value, customer service, and innovation. To be eligible, most of your annual revenue must be derived from services offered to consumers.

Professional Service Business of the Year

This award is for those who demonstrate superior service to business customers. This business must exemplify outstanding customer service and reliability, whether a one-time service like onboarding and implementation or ongoing services like training and project management. To be eligible, most of your annual revenue must be derived from services offered to other businesses.

Co-Working & Home-based Business of the Year

Not every successful business needs a permanent brick-and-mortar location. This award category is for businesses that deliver exceptional products and services to their customers, while occupying space in the owner's home, or in co-working or shared location. Businesses that occupy traditional commercial, office, retail or flex-industrial space do NOT qualify. Subsidiary businesses with locations inside the facility of a larger business with whom it has a commercial relationship do NOT qualify.

GovCon Business of the Year

This award recognizes small businesses that are built to serve the public sector and excel within the government contracting space. To be eligible, a small business must meet this criteria: 1) Government-Focused: The business must generate the majority of its revenue from Federal, State, and/or Local government contracts; 2) Small Business Classification: The company must meet the small business size standard for its primary NAICS code, under which it generates the majority of its revenue.

Health & Wellness Business of the Year

This award recognizes businesses that provide products and/or services that support the health and wellness of their customers, patients or their client's employees. Successful applicants will demonstrate innovative and effective approaches to engaging their clients or patients in ways that advance wellness in the workplace and cultivate an active, healthy lifestyle.

Nonprofit Organization of the Year *(separate application)*

Loudoun's economy depends on a healthy and thriving nonprofit sector. The nonprofit organization that earns this award must be a well-managed organization and deliver essential programs and/or services to Loudoun's citizens. They also must be located in Loudoun, be designated by the IRS as a 501(c) 3 entity or/and a fund of a community foundation.

Tourism, and Hospitality Business of the Year

Celebrating excellence in Loudoun County's retail, tourism, and hospitality sectors, this award recognizes an exceptional business that has consistently demonstrated outstanding performance through exemplary customer service, innovative offerings, and a commitment to enriching our local economy, while elevating the experience for both residents and visitors alike.

2026 Small Business of the Year (SBOY)

This is the greatest honor the Loudoun Chamber can bestow on a Loudoun small business. The 2026 Small Business Awards category winners are the only businesses eligible for this honor.