



TORCH AWARDS APPLICATION & INFORMATION TIP SHEET

What are the The Torch Awards for Ethics?

BBB serving the Pacific Southwest Torch Awards for Ethics is an annual awards program that publicly recognizes local companies that go above and beyond with its customers, community, and stakeholders, and those who have made the commitment to the highest ethical business standards. This award is earned not given.

BBB has distilled our intentional focus on trust and ethics into four C's – Character, Culture, Customers, Community, and this is the basis for the Torch Awards entry process. The application outlines the character of the organization's leadership, how an authentic culture is being fostered, how the company prioritizes its relationship with customers, and the impact the organization is making in their community.

The award embodies the Better Business Bureau® mission of advancing marketplace trust.

Why Should Your Company Apply for the Torch Awards?

By applying for the BBB Torch Awards for Ethics, your company can elevate its reputation, inspire trust, and gain valuable recognition. This prestigious award honors organizations that exemplify ethical leadership, strong business practices, and a commitment to community.

Winning a Torch Award can help:

- **Enhance your brand reputation:** Position your company as an industry leader in ethics and integrity.
- **Boost employee morale:** Recognize and reward your team's hard work and dedication to ethical practices.
- **Attract top talent:** Showcase your company's commitment to ethical business practices and attract top talent.
- **Strengthen customer relationships:** Build trust and loyalty with your customers by demonstrating your commitment to ethical business practices.
- **Gain valuable publicity:** Generate positive media coverage and increase brand visibility.

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Eligibility

The Torch Awards is open to for-profit companies of all sizes physically located within Southern California, Central & Inland California, or Greater Arizona as defined below.

- **Southern California:** San Diego, Orange, Imperial, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.
- **Central & Inland Empire:** Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Kern, Inyo, Mono, Mariposa, Madera, Merced counties.
- **Greater Arizona:** Apache, Coconino, Gila, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pinal, Yavapai and Yuma Counties.

A company is eligible if the following apply:

- Holds a BBB rating of A-, A, or A+.
- BBB Accreditation is not required.
- In business for 3 years or longer (started in/before 2022 can apply in 2025).
- Not a government agency or non-profit 501c3.
- Hasn't been a Torch Award category winner in the past three years. (winners from 2022 can apply in 2025.)
- Finalists applications are valid for 3 years from submission (as of 2023).

How to Apply:

- Complete the online application by Friday, April 18, 2025 (11 PM PDT).
- Address all 3 statements in the 4 main criteria sections.
- Use clear, concise responses with photos and examples whenever possible.
- Videos and links within the application are not accepted.
- Remember: Strong written submissions with examples are key!

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The Judging Process

Entries are evaluated by a panel of independent judges composed of business and community leaders.

Your application will be judged against the criteria, not against other applicants. Each company is unique, so focus on showcasing your organization's strengths and commitment to character, culture, customers, and community. Provide detailed examples, stories, and supporting documents to illustrate your points effectively.

Finalist Interviews:

- Arizona: Tuesday, June 17th
 - BBB - 1010 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix, AZ
- Orange County / Riverside County: Tuesday, June 24th
 - Hilton Irvine - 18800 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine, CA
- San Diego: Tuesday, June 26th
 - BBB - 4747 Viewridge Ave, San Diego, CA
- Central & Inland California: TBD (June 2025)
 - TBD

If you are selected as a finalist, please note the following requirements:

- **Finalist Interview:** Mandatory for all finalists.
- **Representative:** CEO requested + one additional company representative. Variation is acceptable based on schedules.
- **Scheduling:** Finalists will choose a time slot from the signup sheet. Please hold the day until finalists are announced. Finalists announced at the end of May/beginning of June 2025.
- **Category Winner Eligibility:** Not attending the finalist interview will result in ineligibility from winning a category award, though your company will remain a finalist.

Event Dates:

- **San Diego:** September 9, 2025 (11 AM)
- **Orange, Riverside & San Bernardino County:** October 21, 2025 (11 AM)
- **Arizona:** November 19, 2025 (6 PM)
- **Central & Inland Empire:** Date TBD (November 2025)

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Main Criteria Section

Keep the following in mind when completing this section...

- Please respond to all (3) statements below when addressing this section:
- Upload response in one pdf file that can be up to five pages (max).
- Please remember when answering each statement to include examples, photos, company excerpts to give the judges a greater understanding of your company.
- Remember: Strong written submissions with examples are key!

CRITERIA 1: CHARACTER

Overview: As CEO, President, Owner or Executive Director your leadership character sets the tone for your entire organization. As a leader, explain how you behave intentionally and communicate with your leadership team, employees, customers and stakeholders in a way that is consistent with your beliefs.

Please address all (3) statements below when responding to this section:

1. How you strive to live and lead with high character and intentionally seek feedback in order to make personal improvements.
2. How you empower your staff to carry out your organization's commitment to building and maintaining ethical business practices.
3. Tools, activities or training that reinforce your staff's commitment to character ethics as part of the organization's normal business practices.

**Upload response in one PDF file up to five pages (max).*

CRITERIA 2: CULTURE

Overview: Illustrate how your organization works toward a culture of trust through clarity of purpose, empowering employees, and opportunities for growth.

Please address all (3) statements below when responding to this section:

1. How you unite your team around your organization's vision and mission statement.
2. How you empower employees to help shape the expectations and culture of your organization.
3. What practices your company uses that demonstrates leadership's commitment to individual employees.

**Upload response in one PDF file up to five pages (max).*

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CRITERIA 3: CUSTOMERS

Overview: Give examples of internal practices your organization uses to build better customer relationships.

Please address all (3) statements below when responding to this section:

1. How you empower your employees to proactively address issues experienced by customers.
2. How you go above and beyond to maintain transparency with your customers.
3. Provide an instance where your commitment to honesty was a positive differentiator in a challenging customer interaction.

**Upload response in one PDF file up to five pages (max).*

CRITERIA 4: COMMUNITY

Overview: Display organizational programs, contributions and activities that return value to and support your community.

Please address all (3) statements below when responding to this section:

1. Programs or events that your organization has in place to actively engage with the community.
2. How employees are encouraged to and recognized for spending time in community service activities that your organization and employees value.
3. Contribution of funds or in-kind services to community programs consistent with the organization's values.

**Upload response in one PDF file up to five pages (max).*

CEO LETTER

Round out your application by sharing your CEO statement:

- Why does your CEO believe your company merits consideration for this award?
- What would it mean to you if your company won a Torch Awards?
- Touch on how your background and experiences (good & bad) have shaped your leadership and ownership beliefs and practices.
- Include a clear and concise message.
- Two pages maximum.

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REFERENCES

Provide (3) reference letters varying from customers, vendors, and community partners.

- The letters should describe and confirm your relationship with that organization and how you had a positive impact.
- You can include more within the four criteria pages if applicable.
- Provide contact information for your attorney, Accountant/CPA, and banking institution (if available).

APPLICATION DEADLINE

APPLICATIONS DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 18th, 2025 (11 PM PDT)*

**Application support available through 5:00 PM PST*

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

Visit the Resource Portal:

<https://www.bbb.org/local/1126/torch-awards-for-ethics/application-portal>

Visit the Torch Microsites:

torchawards.bbbcommunity.org

QUESTIONS?

Contact Shelley Bradley, Director of Signature Events

- shelley.bradley@bbbcommunity.org
- [858-427-1136](tel:858-427-1136)