Marks of a Winner:

An Evaluator's Guide to what to look for when grading CSAE Awards of Distinction

2022

SCORING KEY

You are asked to evaluate each entry using a scale of 0-5. Here's what that means:

    5: **OUTSTANDING:** An extraordinary or insightful approach or result

    4: Better than average

    3: **AVERAGE:** An adequate approach or result; professionally competent but not exceptional; not necessarily a winner

    2: Somewhat less than satisfactory

    1: A generally inadequate approach or result

    0: Not answered or totally inappropriate

TIPS

- Start with a "3" for a competent effort and grade up or down from that standard.

- Just because an answer is competent does not mean it deserves a "5" — save the "5"s for truly outstanding work. Equally, do not discount a strategic, insightful problem-solving approach for a tiny technical flaw — you will seldom see perfection in an entry.

- If you are scoring too many entries as "1"s or "5"s, you should re-evaluate your judging approach.

MARKS

- Entries with total marks of 35 to 37 are considered Awards of Merit; entries with total marks of 38 to 50 will be awarded Awards of Excellence.

- Entries with total marks of 0 to 34 will not receive an award.

Review the following with consideration to the presentation and supplemental materials.

Concept/Need: Relevance, Creativity & Originality

1. How does the submission explore innovative ideas and concepts or new approaches in the categories identified?

A SATISFACTORY entry will take a fairly standard approach to finding a solution but will do it competently.

MARK UP for:
- Stands out from others
- Shows a clearly original or creative approach
- Leaves a lasting impression
- Makes you wish you had thought of it!

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- A clichéd approach
- A product or program likely to bore the audience or be buried by the competition
- A "creative" approach that clearly would not work

2. How clearly does the presentation identify the need or opportunity and its effect on the organization?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:
- Provide sufficient context about the organization and its priorities so that you can see how this project could contribute to the broader organization's success
- Clearly define and show understanding of the problem or opportunity
- Show how the problem or opportunity was identified and why it matters
- Explain how the project or program addresses the need that was identified

MARK UP for:
- Solid formal or informal research used to identify the opportunity
- Superior explanation of how the research was used to define the opportunity
- Clear explanation of specific changes or challenges that led to the opportunity
- Superior explanation of why it matters for the organization

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- Does not simply describe the organization and its mandate
- Does not explain how the opportunity was identified
- Fails to demonstrate how the project would help the organization
- "Assumes" the need, or takes it as given

3. How clearly are the critical characteristics of the audience identified? How well do the elements of the project reflect an understanding of the needs and characteristics of the target audience?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Describe audience characteristics and needs in sufficient detail to show how that understanding led to choices of strategy, tactics, partners, funding, etc.
- Clearly state who the primary audience was although there may be a secondary audience

- Embody choices appropriate to the audiences

Mark UP for:

- Research to determine audience characteristics and/or needs; thorough formal research is best; informal analysis can be credited
- A focused description that demonstrates the thought process linking audience to strategy and tactics
- Addressing a variety of relevant factors, e.g., prior knowledge, education level, geography, psychographics, motivations, opinions, issues, kind of business, relationship to the organization or the like
- Particularly good choices matching audience characteristics
- Packaging of messages or program elements that would clearly impact the specific audience

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Does not define the audience or claims the "general public" or "all members" as an audience without defining their specific needs or characteristics
- Has a long list of audiences but no descriptions or analysis that would show whether the solution chosen was appropriate to those people
- Makes vague, unsupported assumptions about audience needs
- Has demographic detail on the audience, but it does not seem relevant to choices made in the project.
- Level of language, design or program elements too complex or too patronizing for the defined audience
- Program elements aimed at audiences not described

Implementation: Process, Investment, and Learnings

4. How effectively is the project implemented in terms of budget, time, and other resources?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Describe the resources needed and available (budget, employees/consultants, volunteers, equipment)
- Note challenges encountered in implementation and how they were overcome (reward for smart solutions to challenges, but avoid penalizing if everything went according to plan)
- Explain how the entrant sold the plan to partners, the Board of Directors etc., if required

Mark UP for:

- Appropriate use of the budget; reward effective use of a constrained budget or suitable spending if not constrained
- Effective and appropriate use of internal and external resources
- Clever approach to selling the project or engaging partners

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- Does not provide budget information
- Shows wasteful or inappropriate use of the budget and/or other resources
- Does not clearly explain how the project was implemented and how various roles and resources were coordinated by the entrant

Note: Budget information is important. Entries should be penalized if sufficient information is not included.

Watch for:
- Apologies or regrets for a small budget, slow progress, inappropriate choice of media, etc.
- Excuses based on limited resources ("If we had more employees, we could have. . .").
- Media/medium that don't suit the audience
- Excessive use of resources without proper justification

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5. How well do the goals and objectives address the stated need? To what extent are the objectives measurable in addressing the stated need?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:
- State an overall "big picture" goal: what were they trying to achieve with this project? There should be only one goal; it does not need to be measurable.
- State about 1-3 specific, results-based objectives that set measurable targets and/or have clear criteria for success

Mark UP for:
- A clearly stated visionary goal, clearly linked to the organization's objectives and the need/opportunity that was identified
- Objectives that are results-based, stated in terms of impact on the target audience
- Objectives that, taken as a whole, appropriately measure success for the project
- Objectives that clearly measure significant results in a quantified way or with clear criteria for success
- Identifying appropriate measures for projects where it is difficult to do so

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- Has no stated objectives
- Has immeasurable objectives
- Has vague objectives with no specific targets, e.g., "to improve morale"
- States objectives based on processes not results, e.g., "to produce a newsletter on budget" or "to host the gala on January 15th." These are not objectives – they're the entrant's job

▪ Has too many objectives (unfocused) or "slam-dunk" objectives that are too "soft" to achieve the goal, e.g., "increase attendance by 1%"

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6. How well do the supplemental materials reflect the objectives in the presentation?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:
▪ Reflect the objectives set out in the presentation

MARK UP if the entry:
▪ Is clearly implemented in such a way as to be likely to achieve the objectives that were defined
▪ Reflects choices of design, staging, hosting, etc., that are clearly appropriate given the objectives
▪ Has clear, consistent messages and program elements reflecting the objectives
▪ Is impactful in communicating and reflecting the organization's mission or mandate

MARK DOWN if:
▪ Some objectives are not addressed in the supplemental materials
▪ Messaging is not consistent
▪ Excess elements in the sample distract from the stated objectives
▪ The sample offered does not show you what was done: incomplete, confusing or poorly presented/explained

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7. How clearly does the supplemental material meet or exceed the accepted technical and professional standards for the medium/media selected?

A **SATISFACTORY** entry will have good production values appropriate to the media/medium selected and the available budget, while reflecting professional standards of ethics, good taste, etc.

MARK UP for:
▪ Effective use of a limited budget
▪ Efficient use of the budget to create the most effective project/program possible
▪ Quality of writing, messaging, staging, hosting etc.
▪ Consistent messaging, branding and program elements across all tactics

MARK DOWN for:
▪ Amateurish work
▪ Out-of-date approaches
▪ Poor technical production
▪ Apparent excess spending not likely to achieve results
▪ Evident disrespect for the audience, e.g., poor taste

Evaluation: Benefits, Outcomes, and Next Steps

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8. How thoroughly were the results measured against the objectives? *(Score 0 if not measured)*

A SATISFACTORY entry should:
- Prove that the objectives were met through formal evaluation
- Have evaluation measures directly related to the objectives that were set
- Have methods of measurement appropriate to the project

Mark UP for:
- Thorough documentation of measurement
- Appropriateness of measures in relation to the stated objectives
- Effective measurement of things that are difficult to measure
- Overall thoroughness of evaluation

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- Measures *outputs* rather than *outcomes,* e.g., "the brochure was distributed on time" vs. "the brochure increased senior members' acceptance of the organization's plans based on the X survey"
- Does not have a measure to match each objective
- Has only anecdotal evaluation, e.g., "We heard that people liked the gala"
- Does not relate evaluation to audience or objectives, e.g., "My manager liked it"
- Uses data or measures inappropriately, e.g., does not support conclusions

Watch for:
- Target objectives that are never mentioned in the Objectives section but noted in the results section
- Results that were obtained through unknown or questionable means
- Quantitative results that are statistically invalid, e.g., sample size too small
- Survey response rates that are not stated
- Illogical pairing of objectives and qualitative/quantitative results.

9. How effective is the overall solution implemented? To what extent does the overall solution demonstrate a strategic or creative approach to the stated need?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:
- Describe the plan the entrant developed and what they did
- Explain the rationale, demonstrating that the plan is an appropriate approach to the need or opportunity

Mark UP for:
- A well-explained rationale clearly linking audience characteristics and objectives to tactics chosen
- A plan that is clearly appropriate for the stated need or opportunity
- Sound reasoning supporting choices, possibly including evaluation of other options considered
- Creativity and innovation in devising a solution

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- Does not explain what was done or why
- Offers a plan that does not seem likely to achieve the goal and objectives
- Offers a tired response to a standard association problem
- Does not reference any supplemental materials that illustrate the work completed

10. How well are the project's/program's goals and objectives met?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:
- Demonstrate that it has met its goal and objectives

Mark UP:
- If you are easily convinced that the objectives were met, and the project was a success
- If it seems to you a sound blueprint for a project of this type

Mark DOWN if the entry:
- Had weak or unclear objectives; if it's not clear what the objectives were, you can't really evaluate how successful it was
- Claims success, but on grounds that are not related to the objectives or impact on the target audience
- Uses data inappropriately to claim success, or data does not support conclusions
- Selectively picking data to prove success, but ignores other evidence that would lead to a less positive evaluation

Watch for:
- Results that are positive but weren't specifically set out in the objectives, e.g., "Management really liked the magazine design." Don't necessarily penalize for this because some results are unexpected or unplanned, e.g., notes of congratulations from the audience, but ensure that back-up is included
- Overly positive results that don't seem possible given the project description
- Results that are too narrow or insubstantial
- "Highlights" of results that don't seem to paint the entire picture
- Generalizations or vague results, e.g., "Members seemed to really like the article."