

RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence - How to Win

This guide is intended to help applicants for the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence develop your submission.

1. Read and absorb the criteria and entry guidance

This goes without saying but make sure you have understood what is required of you in terms of the entry process, the submission content and additional information.

Check you are entering the most suitable category for your project (if applicable – some Regions only have one category), and you meet the eligibility criteria. If you are entering the same project into more than one category make sure you tailor each submission to the category it is entered into.

2. This is an award for outstanding planning

This is an award to recognise planning excellence, so whilst your project may have excellent architectural or engineering merit for example (and by all means briefly reference these), please focus your submission on the planning. We aren't looking to make the award to everyday planning, or what is expected as normal service, we are looking for outstanding examples. Were there unusual problems that were addressed by the project, was a difficult situation turned around by good planning, was it a new or ground breaking way of handling a problem? Please ensure your submission showcases the value planning has had in this project and you provide strong evidence.

3. Remember the judges are human

A small panel of judges will be shortlisting and evaluating your entry. If you shortlisted, your submission will be judged further and this will be in comparison to other projects.

The judges are professional planners but they are also human! Therefore please think about the presentation of your submission – is it easy and straightforward to read, does it contain too much jargon? Make it easy to read.

4. Answer all the criteria

Address all of the criteria clearly. Continually ask yourself 'how'. Don't use high level statements which can be bland, such as the "project addressed climate change by reducing energy consumption" instead answer how it is reducing energy consumption and focus on the relevant planning issues (there is no need to go into the technical data of PV output etc.); how this was done and how planning facilitated it / made it happen. Again please ensure the submission shows the value of planning and provides good evidence.

5. Find the balance between brevity and rambling

There is a balance between ensuring your submission is so brief that it gives little detail and giving too much detail and becomes rambling. Please remember the judges' time is precious and you need to convince them that your submission is worthy, firstly of being a finalist and then to be a winner.

Be succinct but, as discussed in point 4, please ensure you have answered everything that the criteria needs you to. Give it to someone not linked to the project to read and see whether they understand what you are saying. It is very easy for someone involved in the project to fill the gaps with their knowledge, without even realising they've done so.

6. Don't be afraid to say there were problems

Whilst occasionally everything goes smoothly, often there are problems that need to be overcome. There might be a partner involved with particular demands, the project might be dealing with a sensitive issue that neighbours don't like, finances might be withdrawn causing problems in delivery, there may be a change of personnel, an election outcome may change the democratic input. Any of these factors and importantly how they are handled, might be the reason whether your project wins or not, so don't shy away from them, if they add value to your submission.

7. Make the project attractive but avoid psychedelic!

Pages of text can be difficult and potentially boring to read, no matter what they say. Make your submission attractive, break it down into sections, use some colour and include images that helpfully illustrate points being made. Avoid being overly indulgent and distracting away from the messages you are relaying.

8. Respect your submission

The RTPI Planning Excellence Awards are prestigious awards. Equally you are taking the time to prepare a submission in for a project you are undoubtedly proud of. So give yourself plenty of time to prepare your submission, give time to proof read it and ask someone else, not directly involved, to read it and check they were able to pick the points that you are trying to get across to the judges.

Whilst following these points won't guarantee that you will win, they will help give you the edge.

Good luck!