



**RULES FOR THE 2021 GOVERNMENTAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL AWARDS COMPETITION
Deadline for submission is June 25, 2021**

ABOUT THE AWARDS

The Governmental Research Association (GRA) Awards recognize exceptional research and educational efforts regarding state, regional and local governmental issues performed by members of the association. The awards competition, judged by fellow GRA members, offers staff of member organizations and individual GRA members the opportunity to showcase their work and learn from their peers, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the overall quality of the GRA's contribution to the field of governmental research.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Research and Education

- **Most Distinguished Research.** This award recognizes an outstanding research effort by a governmental research agency or individual GRA member. The award is based on the challenge of the subject matter, the degree to which the study is ground-breaking, and how well the basic purpose of the report is carried out. Other criteria include: the use of new and/or innovative research methods, or new and/or innovative uses of existing methods; usefulness of the study to other states and/or municipalities; and whether or not the subject is one of critical national, regional, or local concern or costs.
- **Outstanding Policy Achievement.** This award recognizes tangible improvements in public policy, management, service delivery, and/or cost savings resulting from the research and recommendations of a governmental research agency or individual GRA member. The award may also take into account the qualitative characteristics of the relevant research.
- **Most Effective Education.** This award recognizes research, communication, and educational activities by a governmental research agency or individual GRA member that are intended to educate the public and/or public officials on governmental matters, without necessarily making a recommendation(s) for change. Award entries should demonstrate how the publication(s) and/or educational activities expanded public awareness of an important government issue and how the work contributed to more informed discourse and public decision making. Consideration will be given to how the original written research was used in various communication and educational methods, including short-form and journalistic-style publications and materials. Entries should highlight the most effective presentation methods used to achieve a greater public awareness of the matter.

Entries in each of the above categories must designate a focus area based on the type of issues they cover: (1) state government issues, (2) local government issues, and (3) regional or multi-jurisdictional issues.

Special Awards

The GRA Board of Trustees may create additional categories to meet special circumstances, provided such categories are in keeping with the overall spirit and purpose of the awards program. For this year's competition, the Board has established the following special award(s):

- **Best COVID-19 Response.** This award recognizes the overall quality of the research, communication, and educational activities of a governmental research agency or individual GRA member that are intended to inform the public and/or public officials about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on public health and government. Award entries should demonstrate how the publication(s) and/or educational activities expanded public awareness and contributed to more informed discourse and public decision making. This award considers the overall body of work on COVID-19 issues; you may still enter COVID-19 related reports and activities in any of the other award categories.



- **Communications Awards.** In recognition that GRA members are finding new ways to engage the public, the Communications Awards will honor outstanding creative efforts by governmental research agencies and individual GRA members to deliver high-quality information, data analysis, and/or research findings. Each member organization or individual may submit no more than one entry per category:
 - **Best Data Visualization.** An online, graphical presentation of data that communicates information clearly and efficiently. Examples of acceptable formats include, but are not limited to, infographics, interactive maps and charts, and dashboards. Consideration will be given to both aesthetic form and functionality.
 - **Best Short Video.** An online video of no more than 3 minutes that communicates information clearly and efficiently. Consideration will be given to both aesthetic form and functionality.
 - **Best Short-Form Writing.** A short-form article or blog post of no more than 2,000 words, published on the member's website or an external website, that explains and/or analyzes a governmental issue in a clear and accessible manner. Consideration will be given to form, style, and content.
 - **Best Original Commentary.** A short-form column or blog post of no more than 2,000 words, published on the member's website or an external website, that interprets and/or comments on a governmental issue in a clear and accessible manner. Consideration will be given to form, style, and content.

ELIGIBLE ENTRIES

To be eligible for this competition, entries must meet the following guidelines:

Basic Eligibility Guidelines:

- A governmental research agency or individual GRA member must be, and have been at the time the research was performed, a current dues-paying member of the Governmental Research Association.
- Entries shall deal with governmental problems or issues and may be in the form of a single report or series of reports dealing with a single subject, or a single educational activity or series of activities.
- No one may enter more than one report in each category.
- No report, article, or commentary may be entered unless the planning, supervision, research, and/or editing was primarily performed by the submitting agency or individual GRA member.
- Data visualizations and videos must be planned, designed and supervised by the submitting agency or individual GRA member. Either in-house or outsourced expertise for production and editing is acceptable.

Additional Eligibility Guidelines:

- **Entries for Most Distinguished Research, Most Effective Education, Best COVID-19 Response, and Communications Awards** may include qualifying reports issued or activities conducted at any time from January 1, 2019 to the cutoff date for this year's competition. If a series of materials or activities is entered, the series may have been commenced prior to the previous calendar year but must have been concluded within the time limits for the current competition. No report or educational activity, or series of reports or activities, may be entered in more than one annual GRA competition for these awards.
- **Entries for Outstanding Policy Achievement** may include qualifying reports issued at any time, since the award is based on the results that follow from the research. Results may include, but not be limited to, cost savings in operations or personnel, or quantifiably improved delivery of government services or programs. However, the tangible governmental improvements and/or cost savings resulting from the research must have occurred from January 1, 2019 to the cutoff date for the competition.

SELECTION PROCESS

Research and Education, Best COVID-19 Response, Best Short-Form Writing and Best Original Commentary



- There shall be three standing awards committees: Distinguished Research Awards Committee; Effective Education Awards Committee; and Outstanding Policy Achievement Awards Committee.
- For this year's Special Awards, the GRA Board of Trustees designates the Outstanding Policy Achievement Committee to judge Best COVID-19 Response. It also forms a Communications Awards Committee of communications staff members of GRA member organizations to judge the Best Short-Form Writing and Best Original Commentary awards and select the finalists for the Best Data Visualization and Best Short Video awards.
- Each committee shall consist of current, dues-paying members of GRA appointed by the President of GRA. The number on each committee shall be not less than three or more than seven, of whom one shall be designated chair.
- Each awards committee shall consider the entries submitted to it and shall make such awards as the committee members in their discretion feel are appropriate. An awards committee may decide that entries other than the winning entry are deserving of special recognition. If so, the committee may, at its discretion, award a "Certificate of Merit" to no more than two noteworthy entries per focus area.
- The designated chair of each committee shall acknowledge each eligible entry by writing the entrant, and shall notify in the same manner any entrant whose entry is disqualified. The committee chair, after consultation with the GRA President or designee, may allow any member of the committee to postpone submitting an entry until the following year or excuse himself/herself from voting, if it is felt that consideration of such report(s) or activities by the committee would create a conflict of interest.
- Upon completion of the committee's work, the chair shall inform the Secretary of GRA in writing of the results of the committee's work. The committee report shall contain a list of entries for each award; any disqualifications, with reasons therefore; the committee's choices for awards and certificates of merit; and any recommendations the committee may wish to make about future awards competitions.
- The committee chair or a representative shall present the awards at the GRA Annual Conference.

Best Data Visualization and Best Short Video

- The designated chair of the Communications Awards Committee shall acknowledge each eligible entry by writing the entrant, and shall notify in the same manner any entrant whose entry is disqualified.
- The Communications Awards Committee shall select no more than five finalists each for Best Data Visualization and Best Short Video. GRA Annual Conference attendees will vote on the finalists during a period and by electronic means designated by the GRA Board. One winner will be selected for each award.

HONOREE NOTIFICATION AND AWARD PRESENTATION

Winners will be notified by July 9, 2021. Awards shall be in the form of certificates presented at the GRA Annual Conference, to be held virtually on July 20, 2021. The GRA Secretary shall arrange for the production of the certificates. The certificates shall refer to the type of and type of research – for example, "Most Distinguished Research, State Issues" – and be presented to the employees of the submitting agency or the individual GRA members who were directly responsible for the direction, research, writing, production, and administration of the report(s) and/or activities. Honorees will be invited to make a presentation at the GRA Annual Conference, in a format determined by the GRA Board.

INTERPRETATION AND APPEALS

The GRA President, or a designee, shall have the authority to make appropriate interpretations of these rules and respond to any problems encountered by the awards committees in the course of carrying out their responsibilities. Any decision to declare an entry ineligible may be appealed in writing by the entrant to the GRA Board of Trustees, whose decision on the matter shall be timely and final.

HOW TO ENTER

Complete the online entry form available from the GRA President. To help you prepare your entry, a copy of the form is provided on the following pages.



**GOVERNMENTAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
2021 AWARDS COMPETITION ENTRY FORM**

Enter the following information in the online entry forms provided by the GRA President

YOUR INFORMATION

Organization / Individual	
Title of Entry	
Contact Person	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	

CONTRIBUTORS

Please list all persons directly responsible for the entry (for example, project director, principal researcher, research assistant, publications coordinator, etc.)

Name	Title	Responsibilities

SELECT AN AWARD CATEGORY AND, IF APPLICABLE, A FOCUS AREA FOR YOUR ENTRY:

Award Category	Focus Area
Most Distinguished Research	State government issue, local government issue, or regional/multi-jurisdictional issue
Outstanding Policy Achievement	State government issue, local government issue, or regional/multi-jurisdictional issue



Most Effective Education	State government issue, local government issue, or regional/multi-jurisdictional issue
Best COVID-19 Response	Not applicable
Best Data Visualization	Not applicable
Best Short Video	Not applicable
Best Short-Form Writing	Not applicable
Best Original Commentary	Not applicable

YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Please be specific in answering the questions to give the awards committee a clear understanding of your accomplishments.

Most Distinguished Research

1. Provide an overview of the research project you are entering. Describe your project's purpose, goals and objectives; summarize your research methodology; and summarize your key findings.
2. State the date(s) when the qualifying research was published.
3. Describe the challenge of the subject matter and its importance to national, regional, or local concerns or costs.
4. In what ways, if any, would you consider the research to be groundbreaking?
5. To what extent did you innovate new research methods, or find innovative uses of existing methods?
6. Describe the potential usefulness of the study to other states and/or municipalities.
7. Describe why you think your research is exceptional and merits an award.
8. Upload a single PDF containing hyperlinks to, or copies of, your reports, articles, website posts, social media posts, and any other supporting materials that you think are relevant to your entry and support its case for winning an award. Be sure to include your organization in the file name.

Outstanding Policy Achievement

1. Provide an overview of the policy achievement and the research that supported it. Describe the specific research recommendations that informed the policy change.
2. State the time period during which the tangible governmental improvement(s) and/or the cost savings resulting from the research occurred.
3. What was the significance of the problem that previously existed?
4. How did you promote your research recommendations and work toward their implementation?
5. How have the policy changes improved the quality, quantity, or timeliness of governmental services and/or reduced costs for the public?
6. Describe why you think your work is exceptional and merits an award.
7. Upload a single PDF containing hyperlinks to, or copies of, your reports, articles, website posts, social media posts, and other materials explaining your recommendations. Be sure to include your organization in the file name.
8. Upload a single PDF compiling materials documenting your influence and demonstrating the tangible results/savings, such as public documents, media reports, and comments from private and public officials. Be sure to include your organization in the file name.

Most Effective Education

1. Provide an overview of the research project and/or educational activities you are entering. Describe your project's purpose, goals, and objectives; and summarize your key findings.
2. State the time period during which the report and/or activities were conducted.



3. Describe the importance of the governmental issue that was the subject of your work.
4. How did your research add value to the public discourse or decision making on the issue?
5. How did you communicate your findings, and which methods proved most effective and comprehensible, especially non-print and/or multimedia presentations?
6. How did your report and/or activities increase or broaden awareness or understanding of the issue among the public and/or public officials, thereby enabling informed discourse and decision making?
7. Describe why you think your work is exceptional and merits an award.
8. Upload a single PDF containing (1) hyperlinks to, or copies of, your reports, articles, website posts, social media posts, or other materials that informed the public and/or public officials, and (2) hyperlinks to, or copies of, documentation that your research, educational activities, or advocacy has been effective in informing the public and/or public officials regarding an important issue(s). Examples from successful entries in past years have included, but are not limited to, information on your public appearances and/or events, communications results, or feedback from the public or public officials. Be sure to include your organization in the file name.

Best COVID-19 Response

1. Provide an overview of the research project and/or educational activities you are entering. Describe your project's purpose, goals, and objectives; and summarize your key findings.
2. State the time period during which the report and/or activities were conducted.
3. How did your research add value to the public discourse or decision making on the issue?
4. How did you communicate your findings, and which methods proved most effective and comprehensible, especially non-print and/or multimedia presentations?
5. How did your report and/or activities increase or broaden awareness or understanding of the issue among the public and/or public officials, thereby enabling informed discourse and decision making?
6. Describe why you think your work is exceptional and merits an award.
7. Upload a single PDF containing (1) hyperlinks to, or copies of, your reports, articles, website posts, social media posts, or other materials that informed the public and/or public officials, and (2) hyperlinks to, or copies of, documentation that your research, educational activities, or advocacy has been effective in informing the public and/or public officials regarding an important issue(s). Examples from successful entries in past years have included, but are not limited to, information on your public appearances and/or events, communications results, or feedback from the public or public officials. Be sure to include your organization in the file name.

Best Data Visualization

1. Briefly describe the project for which you created the data visualization.
2. Briefly describe how you created the data visualization, including the software or app used.
3. Briefly describe how you communicated the data visualization.
4. Provide the URL to the webpage displaying the data visualization.

Best Short Video

1. Briefly describe the project for which you created the short video.
2. Briefly describe how you created the video, including the software or app used.
3. Briefly describe how you communicated the short video.
4. Provide the URL to the webpage displaying the video.

Best Short Form Writing

1. Briefly describe the context for the entry, including any broader project to which it relates.
2. Provide the URL to the webpage displaying the article.

Best Original Commentary

1. Briefly describe the context for the entry, including any broader project to which it relates.
2. Provide the URL to the webpage displaying the commentary.



2021 GRA AWARDS COMMITTEES

Most Distinguished Research

Jeff Hornstein, Economy League of Greater Philadelphia, Chair
Carol Portman, Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois
Craig Thiel, Citizens Research Council of Michigan

Outstanding Policy Achievement

Kriss Sjoblom, Washington Research Council, Chair
Kent Gardner, CGR
Stephen Kroes, Two Redwoods Consulting

Most Effective Education

Stephen Stuart, Bureau of Governmental Research, Chair
Criketa Matlock, Charter Schools USA
Roland Calia, Civic Federation

Communications Awards

Katy Broom, Civic Federation, Chair
Chris Barry, Florida Tax Watch
Eric Kneeland, Worcester Regional Research Bureau