

# Celebrate Excellence: Recognize Safety and Health Achievements

## Introduction

An effective method for improving workplace safety involves creating workplace safety and health recognition programs. This guide will help you build an impactful recognition program.

Recognition and appreciation motivate organizations, teams, and individuals to achieve at a high level. Creating a successful safety and health awards program can:

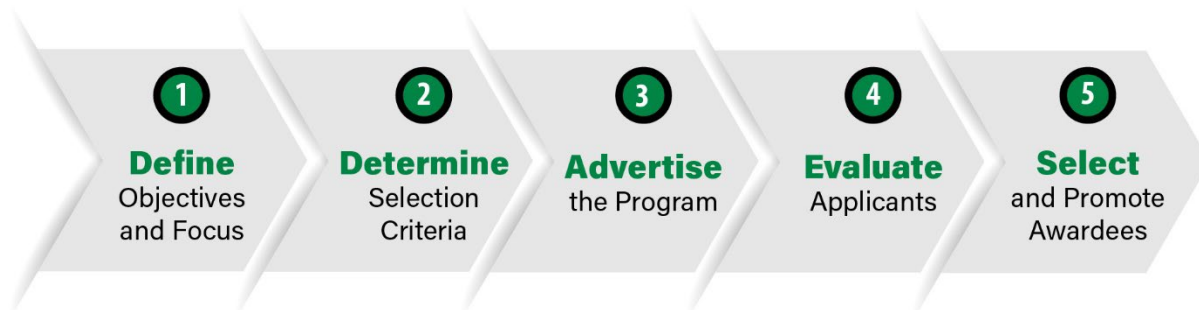
- Encourage companies and teams to establish credibility and prestige within their industry,
- Show an organization’s commitment to safety and health, and
- Bring attention to an organization and make connections with other groups, companies, or the community.

### Who is this guide for?

Professional organizations that play an important leadership role in adopting workplace safety and health strategies.

- Trade Associations
- Safety Organizations
- Business Councils
- Local Agencies
- Non-profit Organizations
- Education Centers and Programs

## 5 Steps for Designing the Recognition Program



### 1. Define Objectives and Focus

First, make sure the goals and focus of the recognition program match your organization’s safety and health values. To do this, set clear goals, decide on specific topics, and figure out who the program will serve.

## Awards for Specific Audiences Can Engage Key Populations



### International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA)

ISEA presents three safety awards through its [Foundation Awards Program](#). One award focuses on a specific audience. “ISEA Rising Safety Star Award” honors candidates who are new (less than 10 years) to the personal protective and safety equipment industry. This award is given every year at the ISEA Foundation Awards Program.

In designing your program, consider the following:

- What will the awards program do? How will it make things better? Should the focus be on performance, innovation, or engagement?
- What safety and health topic(s) will the program or award(s) focus on?
- Will it be a local, regional, or national award?
- Who is it for? Will organizations, teams, or individuals be rewarded?

Clearly stating goals and who the program is for helps plan, review submissions, and choose who gets recognized. Spend time planning this so your safety and health recognition program has a bigger impact.

## Emphasizing Specific Focus Areas Can Provide Lessons Learned



### Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA)

SWANA gives out four safety awards under its [Safety Awards Program](#). Each one focuses on a different topic.

- Biggest Safety Improvement
- Workplace Wellness Program Best Safety Innovation
- Best Safety Training Program

These awards can show examples and teach others in the industry. Awardees are recognized at SWANA's Executive Leadership Summit, WASTECON.

## 2. Determine Selection

Second, make sure the selection process is fair and clear. Set clear metrics for award eligibility by considering performance or contributions to safety and health. Here are some questions to guide you:

- How often will this award be given? Is it a seasonal or annual recognition?
- How can you ensure your program is inclusive of all your members?
- What criteria will you use for the selection and eligibility? For example:
  - Timeline for achievement,
  - Narrative description of achievement(s) or requested information,
  - Other application materials, such as recommendations, and
  - Deadline for submissions.
- How will applications be submitted?
  - Will submissions be online or on paper? What are the benefits and costs of each? What makes the most sense for your audience?
  - Provide an easily accessible checklist to help applicants make sure they've submitted all the required information.

## Clear Selection Criteria Promote Transparency



### International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

IBEW presents awards that honor workers who saved a coworker's life. They outline specific [criteria for the Life Saving Award](#):

- They have three award categories
- All nominations must be made within three years from the date of the event
- Nominations must submit details and proof of incident and be approved by a board member

## Consider Leading vs. Lagging Indicators

Metrics provide powerful information to support an award nomination. When deciding what information to request in an application, consider the benefits of leading indicators over lagging indicators.

**Leading indicators** are helpful because they show how well safety and health practices are working in real time. For example, if management responds to an issue quickly, it shows they care about safety. Slow responses, on the other hand, can indicate a lack of concern and point to a safety system failure that needs to be addressed.

Be aware of **lagging indicators**, which measure the occurrence and frequency of past events, such as:

- No vehicle accidents
- No injuries or illnesses
- No days away from work

These indicators can hide certain incidents and are not as effective in keeping a workplace safe. For example, rewarding employees for the number of days without an incident can potentially lead to not reporting minor accidents because the person may feel badly for ruining the consecutive day count. It's important to report incidents and always keep safety first.

## 3. Advertise the Program

Third, advertising the awards program helps attract applicants. Below are some steps to help promote the recognition program:

- Make a list of ways you currently communicate to your audience, such as social media or email newsletters.
- Are there other ways you could reach them that you do not traditionally use? What messages would encourage them to apply for an award?

## Promoting the Recognition Program is Critical

Make sure to communicate with your audience on the channels they use. Promote the awards with enough time to apply.

For example, Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) communicated that the application for their IEC Awards 2024 IEC Awards were open via social media ([LinkedIn](#)).



## 4. Evaluate Applicants

Fourth, develop your process for evaluating applicants. Here's some ways to approach it:

- Consider who will evaluate the submissions, how they will be conducted and when:
  - Choose a team and explain their roles and responsibilities.
  - Determine if the evaluations will be printed submissions or done online.
  - Create a rubric for scoring to ensure consistency across evaluators. Have a meeting or a clear guide so everyone understands how to use it.
  - Consider having multiple people review each submission to get an average score.
  - Set a timeline for when the evaluations will take place, so the applicants and team know what to expect.

## Group Similar Submissions for Fair Evaluation

Consider grouping similar sized companies when evaluating applicants and awarding recipients. Organizations may have differing obstacles based on their size.

For example, American Petroleum Institute (API) honors small, medium, and large pipeline operators with its [Distinguished Pipeline Safety Award](#).



EMPCo/AMFO Wins 2023 API Distinguished Pipeline Safety Award, Second Year in a Row

## 5. Select and Promote Awardees

Lastly, celebrate the awardees! Consider the following when recognizing them:

Choose the type of award(s) recipients will receive. Some options are:

- Trophies, plaques, or certificates
- Digital award badge for the website
- Fleet decals

Determine how and when the awardees will be recognized. Some options are:

- Website recognition
- Press release announcement
- Invitation and announcement at an event or conference + safety meeting

Additionally, providing awardees with information or templates on when, where, and how to promote their awards through their communications channels is helpful. This ensures key information for internal teams and awardees to coordinate when media and announcements go live.

### Recognition Among Industry Peers is Meaningful

It's a good idea to give out the awards at a big conference or key timeframe in front of a large audience in addition to online recognition. This can encourage more companies to apply in the future. For example, American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) honored its [2024 Safety Award winners](#) during the Annual Convention & Traffic Expo.

#### ATSSA HONORS THREE WITH NATIONAL AWARDS

AWARDS ANNOUNCED TODAY AT 54<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION & TRAFFIC EXPO



## Launch Your Effort

Creating a Safety and Health Recognition Program is a great way to lead in workplace safety and health. By setting clear goals, defining specific criteria, and promoting the program, organizations can motivate members to improve safety and health standards. Recognizing winners boosts their credibility and shows the organization's strong commitment to safety and health.

Integrating [OSHA's Safe + Sound Campaign](#) can make your recognition program even more effective. This national campaign highlights the importance of safety and health programs and offers resources that can enhance your organization's efforts.

A well-planned recognition program, supported by OSHA's Safe + Sound Campaign, can create continuous improvement and help build valuable connections in the community. This collaboration promotes best practices, leading to safer and healthier work environments.