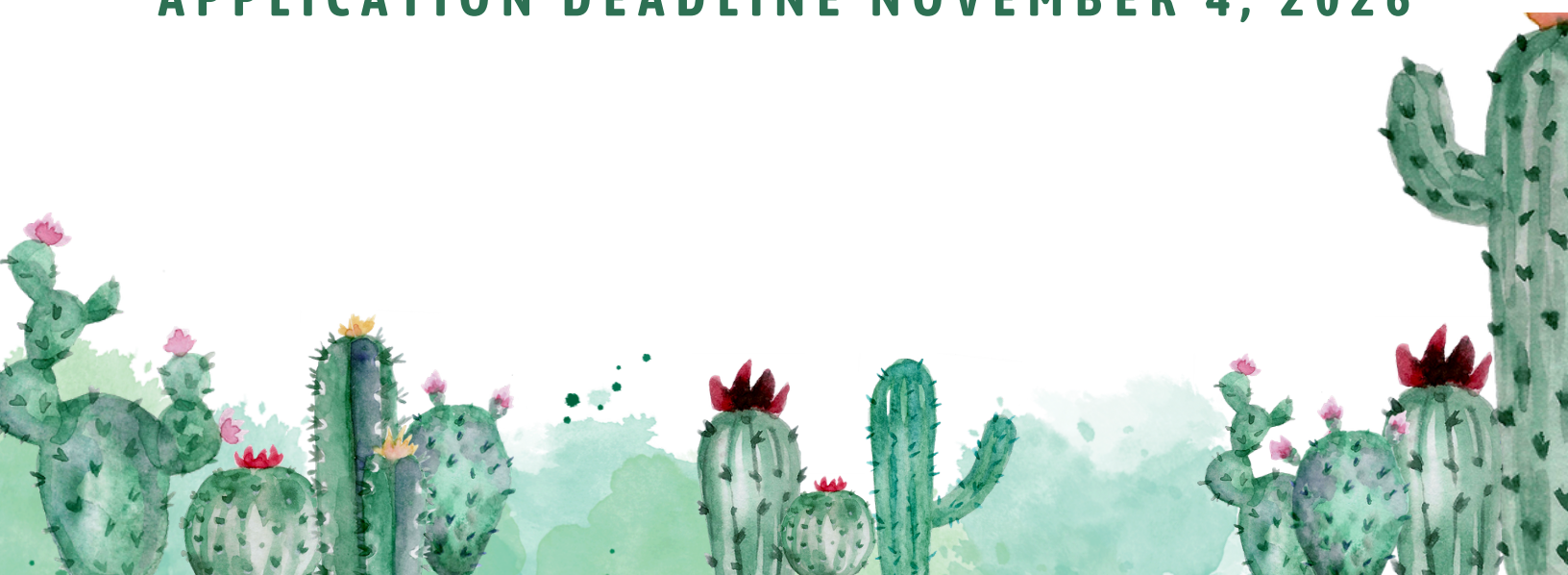
ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

County Summit Awards

RECOGNIZING COUNTY PROGRAMS THAT DELIVER POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGH CREATIVE INNOVATION

APPLICATION DEADLINE NOVEMBER 4, 2026



Innovation For County Success

The Arizona Association of Counties and the AACo Foundation invite you to enter the 2026 County Summit Awards competition.

These unique awards recognize the innovative and creative spirit of Arizona county governments as they find new and effective ways of providing services to their citizens.

Read the following pages for instructions and consider entering your county's most innovative programs and/or projects to win one or more of theses awards. Winners will be honored at the 2026 Annual Conference December 11, 2026 and presented with their awards during the Summit Awards Breakfast.

Summit Award Categories

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC INFORMATION

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE & MANAGEMENT

COURT ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

ELECTIONS & VOTER REGISTRATION

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

HEALTH

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

LIBRARIES

PARKS & RECREATION

YOUTH & EDUCATION

Merit Award Categories

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

RURAL INNOVATION

URBAN INNOVATION

SUBURBAN INNOVATION

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

General Information

Two levels of award are possible: Summit and Merit Awards. Separate entries are required to apply to more than one Summit Award category. In order to qualify for a Merit Award, an entry MUST win a Summit Award in one of the twelve Summit Award categories. There are five Merit Award categories and judges will consider all Summit Award winners for a Merit Award.

Summit and Merit Awards will be presented in person and on stage at the 2026 Annual Conference. In the event that a multi-county application is honored, each county will receive an award.
If you have questions, contact: Gideon Wagner at gwagner@azcounties.org or 602-252-6563 ext. 221.

Entry Instructions

- Complete Official Entry Form (included at the end of this packet).

- Obtain a letter of Endorsement. This is simply a letter signed by either the County Elected Official or the County Administrator with oversight of the program/service applying, authorizing the entry of the program/project in the County Summit Awards completion. A county may submit one letter for multiple entries so long as each entry is listed in the Endorsement Letter.

- Construct your "Executive Summary." This is your statement of the challenge your project/program overcame. The Executive Summary is very important. It must be no more than two 8.5 x 11 single- spaced pages. Please include contact information on the summary. Since this may be published for statewide distribution, please present the information as you would like to see it in print. AACo reserves the right to edit this material.

- Submit your entry and contact information. Please email your entry in its entirety to Gideon Wagner with "2026 County Summit Award Application" in the Subject Line. In the body of your message, please submit:
  - A copy of the 25-Word Summary from the Executive Summary
  - Name of Submitting County
  - Category
  - Entry Title
  - Contact Information

Entry Fee & Deadline

$50.00 per entry. A check payable to "AACo Summit Awards" must be submitted for EACH entry. Entry fees must be received by the application deadline. **To submit entry fees by credit card please contact Gideon Wagner at 602-252-6563 x221.**

All entries must be RECEIVED by 5:00 pm on November 4, 2026. Late entries will no be accepted. Entries cannot be returned.

Organization of the Executive Summary

Overview: Provide a brief, 25-word summary of your program or project.

Problem or Challenge: Describe the problem or challenge your county faced and the process used to address this problem. Explain the unique or critical factors that led to this project.

Budget/Costs/Savings: How much money was budgeted to fund this program/project? List all sources of funding for the project. Did the program/project come within/under the budget? What costs were involved? Please also quantify savings that were realized as a result of program/project. What is the measure of increased productivity or time saved?

Results: Describe the results of the program/project. Discuss how the program or project has positively affected the community improved delivery of services to the public, or improved delivery of services to the public, or improved administration of a program internally.

Project/Program Contact: List the name, title, mailing address, phone and email address of the person who can be contacted about this program/project.

Optional Submission: If your project is too large to submit as an email, please contact Gideon Wagner, as a google drive or drop box may be utilized. Note any physical application and supporting documents such as brochures, flash drives, final reports or other information will not be returned and will become the property of the AACo Foundation.
MAIL to 2026 Summit Awards, Arizona Association of Counties, 1910 W. Jefferson Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85009.

Selection Criteria

A panel of county and private sector officials will evaluate the entries. Judges' decisions are final. The following criteria will be used by the judges to select the winners:

- Statement of the problem & solution
- Innovation, resourcefulness, vision, uniqueness and risk-taking
- Capacity for program/project to be replicated in another Arizona county
- Cost-effectiveness of the program/project
- Conformance to application instructions set forth in the "Entry Instructions" in this brochure.

Tips for successful application:

- Judges will be looking for programs/projects that are innovative, unique & easily replicable. County programs/projects must have been in existence for at least one year at the time of the application.
- Only programs/projects that are county programs/projects will be considered. Those that have previously received a Summit Award are not eligible to enter again for the same program/project.

2026 County Summit Awards

OFFICAL ENTRY FORM

Please complete this form in its entirety and submit with your entry and entry fee. You may type this information on a separate sheet and submit as a cover page to your entry.

AWARD CATEGORY:

(Please note: Merit Awards are determined by the judges from Summit Award winners)

- ☐ Civic Engagement & Public Info.
- ☐ Criminal Justice & Public Safety
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Community & Econ. Dev.
- ☐ Elections & Voter Reg.
- ☐ Libraries
- ☐ County Adm., Fin. & Mgmt.
- ☐ Employment & Training
- ☐ Parks & Recreation
- ☐ Court Admin. & Mgmt.
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Youth & Education

County(Counties)Name(s)

_____

Contact Name and Title

_____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Title of Entry(Seven Word Maximum)

_____

_____

REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING FOR EACH ENTRY:

- Completed entry form 2-page Executive Summary
- Copy of endorsement letter authorizing entry—One letter for multiple entries is permitted. See instructions.
- Payment of $50.00 for each entry. Check prefered, but credit card is accepted, please contact Gideon Wagner.
- One check may be used for multiple entries. Checks should be made payable to: AACo Summit Awards

  Checks and mailed entries should be delivered to:

  AACo County Summit Awards, 1910 W. Jefferson Street, Phoenix, AZ 85009

- Applications may be submitted via email to Gideon Wagner, see more details in application flyer.