2026 Awards and Stages Submission Guidelines

Please read all criteria prior to submission.

In the event of a discrepancy between this document and any other information, these guidelines will prevail.

ITEMS IN BOLD HAVE BEEN MODIFIED SINCE THE LAST 2025 VERSION.

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GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligibility period April 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026. To be eligible, albums, EP's and singles must have been commercially released in this period. Proof of release will be mandatory.

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR AWARDS, THE APPLICANT MUST MEET ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- All applicants must be a member in good standing at the time of the application and ensure their membership is active until October 30, 2026 in order to be nominated and accept an award.
- **Applicants must be a current resident of Newfoundland & Labrador. To qualify, you must meet at least one of the two following criteria:**
    - **Currently living, and having resided in the province for a minimum of 6 months preceding the application date**
    - **Filed provincial taxes as a Newfoundland & Labrador resident in the most recent taxation year prior to the application date**
- For duos or larger groups, at least 50% of members of the group must meet the above residency requirement.
- Must have commercially released at least three (3) singles between **April 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026.** (unless otherwise specified in the specific award criteria)
- Must have fulfilled all legal obligations associated with the album, including but not limited to payment of mechanical royalties, proper attribution of songwriting credits, and all other applicable legal requirements.
- Must provide proof of the date of release of the recording(s) to MusicNL through a manufacturer's invoice, retail verification, a distributor or record company.

Additional considerations

- Proof of recording(s) release must be provided at the time of application. You may submit a manufacturing invoice or documentation from the distributor (CD Baby, Distrokid, TuneCore, Bandcamp etc), aggregator, record company, or streaming service.
- Albums and/or singles that were nominated for an award in a specific category cannot be resubmitted for that award the following year.
- If a category does not reach the minimum of 3 applicants and cannot go ahead, applicants will be informed that their submission can be moved to the most suitable alternative category. At the next awards intake, the program manager will contact applicants to request an updated application. In both cases, no additional cost will be incurred.
- **Submissions must consist of original compositions or genuine creative reinterpretations; cover versions that closely replicate the melodic, harmonic,**

rhythmic, or production elements of the source recording - commonly known as 'covers' or 'soundalikes' - are not eligible. Cover versions of songs originally written by a songwriter from Newfoundland and Labrador are eligible, as long as the submission demonstrates a distinct artistic reimagining that meaningfully departs from the original recording in arrangement, style, or interpretation. MusicNL reserves the right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether a submission constitutes a soundalike cover or an eligible reinterpretation, and that determination is final.

- **Submissions must be the original work of the applicant. The use of AI-generated music, lyrics, or any other AI-produced creative material within a submission will render it ineligible.**
- MusicNL reserves the right to remove any submission from the nominations process if it fails to adhere to the established code of conduct or align with the intent of the award.
- MusicNL reserves the right to make adjustments to the final list of nominees with the sole intent of fostering the growth and advancement of our valued members. Our primary goal is to ensure that all nominees receive the best possible support and recognition within our vibrant music community.
- Final decisions on category eligibility is at the discretion of MusicNL.

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR STAGES (ie SHOWCASE), THE APPLICANT MUST MEET ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Must be a member in good standing at the time of the application and ensure their membership is active until October 30, 2026.
- **Applicants must be a current resident of Newfoundland & Labrador. To qualify, you must meet at least one of the two following criteria:**
    - **Currently living, and having resided in the province for a minimum of 6 months preceding the application date**
    - **Filed provincial taxes as a Newfoundland & Labrador resident in the most recent taxation year prior to the application date**
- For duos or larger groups, at least 50% of members of the group must meet the above residency requirement.
- All applicants must have released a sound recording of any format or duration that has been made commercially available to the general public in Canada.
- All applicants must have released at least one sound recording of any format or duration that has been made commercially available to the general public outside of Canada, or will be made commercially available to the general public outside of Canada within twelve months of the application closing date; or has a tour (minimum six dates) or showcase in territory of export (outside of Atlantic Canada) upcoming within twelve months of the export showcase.
- A professional support team including at least one of the following: artist manager, record label, booking agent, publicist, publisher.
- Public and industry recognition (via radio play, video play, web hits and streams, music press, blogs, awards, etc.)

GENERAL CATEGORIES CRITERIA AND DESCRIPTIONS

In addition to applying for a genre-specific award, artists may also apply for the following general award categories. A single award is presented in each category

Album of the Year – A full-length recording (minimum of 6 tracks or 30 minutes) must be released within the eligibility period to qualify. Both solo artists and groups qualify. All genres accepted.

Fan's Choice Entertainer of the Year – This award recognizes the accomplishments of an artist or group who has performed within the dates of the eligibility period. An artist or group is not required to have an eligible release. Voting for this award is done online by the general public in conjunction with a sponsor.

L'Artiste Francophone de L'Année – This award recognizes an artist or group from the Francophone community. At least 50% of total tracks must be sung in the French language. To qualify, artists/groups must have released at least three (3) singles within the last three (3) years.

Ce prix récompense un artiste ou un groupe issu de la communauté francophone. Au moins 50 % des titres doivent être chantés en français. Pour être éligibles, les artistes/groupes doivent avoir sorti au moins trois (3) singles au cours des trois (3) dernières années.

Global Music Artist of the Year – With a goal to support and celebrate immigrant artists, this award is specifically geared for an individual artist/ group who is a newcomer (including: international student, international graduate, PR, refugee, temporary foreign worker, second generation immigrants etc.) to Newfoundland and Labrador. The artist/group also has a musical practice that increases awareness, belonging, and celebration of diverse and equity-deserving cultures, languages, and/or stories in the community. To qualify, artists/groups must have released at least three (3) songs within the last three (3) years.

Group of the Year – Duos, small and large ensembles (such as choirs and chamber groups), and bands qualify for this award. All genres are accepted. Applicants must meet the general eligibility criteria.

Indigenous Artist of the Year – This award recognizes an Indigenous Artist or Group. If a group, at least 50% of members must be Indigenous. To qualify applicants must have released at least three (3) singles within the last three (3) years, must provide a statement of relationality, and provide a letter of support from an Indigenous official representative, government or organization with whom they are connected/affiliated with.

Music Video of the Year – This award recognizes the creative and technical accomplishments of a music video released. **The video must feature a commercially released song by an artist or group who is a current MusicNL member. The video must have been released during the eligibility period.** The award is presented to the artist(s), as well as the video's producer and director.

Rising Star of the Year – This award recognizes an artist or group who has released their first commercial recording(s) within the dates of the eligibility period. All genres accepted.

Side Musician of the Year – This award recognizes the accomplishments of a recording/performing musician within the dates of the eligibility period. This award is given to an individual and does not require a MusicNL membership. The applicant needs to add a list of their session work in the eligibility period (a selection of concerts, recording sessions, etc.)

Solo Artist of the Year – Solo artists qualify for this award. All genres accepted. Must meet the eligibility criteria.

Ron Hynes Songwriter of the Year – To be considered for songwriter of the year, songwriters must submit three songs that were released within the eligibility period. The songwriter must be a recording artist on the three (3) submitted songs. Songwriter(s) can be nominated in both this category and the Non-Performer Songwriter of the Year category if they are both performing songwriters (recording artist) and write songs for other performers. For collaborations, the applicant songwriter must meet all eligibility criteria. If songwriters are submitting to both categories, they cannot use the same three (3) songs in both submissions. All songs must be registered with SOCAN.

International Touring Artist of the Year - This award celebrates an artist's significant achievements and success in live music touring. It's a recognition of their ability to connect with audiences through live performances and build a strong touring presence outside of Canada.

Songwriter of the Year (Non-Performer) - This award recognizes the accomplishments of a songwriter who wrote material for another artist. Songwriter(s) can be nominated in both this category, and the Songwriter of the Year category if they are both performing songwriters (recording artist) and write songs for other performers. There is no minimum percentage of contribution in this category. Three (3) songs must be submitted as a representation of each songwriter's body of work. The Songwriter(s) must not be a recording artist on the three (3) songs submitted. No member of a songwriting team submitted in Songwriter of the Year (Non-Performing), can be a featured recording artist on any of the songs. If songwriters are submitting to both categories, they cannot use the same three (3) songs in both submissions.

Sound on Screen Award This award is for the songwriters and composers who have demonstrated innovation, commercial success, and artistic merit from music created for screen during the eligibility period. All works submitted must be the composer/songwriter's original
work, written as a result of the creative interaction for a specific screen project. Previously written music for other purposes and synchronized to picture is not eligible (ie. no syncs). Previously written material is not eligible. The work must have been for a production that received its first public screening, broadcast, or release during the eligibility period.

GENRE SPECIFIC CRITERIA AND DESCRIPTIONS

These awards are designed to recognize recordings by artists or groups in the genre they submitted in. A single award is presented in each category. Artists and groups must meet the eligibility criteria listed above to apply for a genre specific award.

Alternative Artist of the Year – This category is for a "non-traditional" genre that exists outside of the mainstream music consciousness or the boundaries of an existing musical genre.

Traditional Artist of the Year – This award recognized an exceptional release in a music tradition with direct historical roots to a specific ancestry, culture, region, or community. The genres can include but are not limited to : trad, powwow, throat singing, call-and-response, bluegrass, Balkan brass, Celtic, Cajun, cumbia, gamelan, Carnatic, reggae, ranchera, mariachi, etc.

Classical Artist of the Year – This award recognizes classical recordings from soloists, chamber ensembles, instrumental ensembles, or soloists accompanied by large ensembles or chamber groups (instrumental or vocal). Eligible genres include, but are not limited to, chamber music, orchestral works, solo performances with ensemble, minimalist compositions, atonal music, film scores, and opera.

Country Artist of the Year – This award recognizes a recording in any style of country music including, but not limited to alt-country, Americana, traditional country, western swing, bluegrass, etc.

Electronic Artist of the Year – This award recognizes a recording by an artist or group that employs electronic musical instruments and electronic music technology at the root of its production. This can include, but are not limited to, house, techno, drum n bass, ambient, dubstep, and various other forms of electronic music.

Folk Artist of the Year –This award recognizes a recording within any style of folk music, celebrating both traditional and contemporary expressions of the genre. Eligible styles

include, but are not limited to, indie folk, progressive folk, contemporary folk, Nueva Canción Latinoamericana, trova, bolero, tango, andino, neo-traditional, neofolk, folk-pop, folk rock, and the roots revival movement.

Instrumental Artist of the Year – This award recognizes a recording by an artist or group that primarily features instrumental music across any genre. To qualify as "instrumental," at least 75% of the submitted tracks must consist of music without vocals. Eligible genres include, but are not limited to, classical, jazz, electronic dance music, lo-fi, ambient, post-rock, world music, and instrumental hip-hop.

Jazz Artist of the Year –This award recognizes excellence in recorded music across the genres of jazz. Eligible styles include, but are not limited to, bebop, swing, vocal jazz, cool jazz, hard bop, modal jazz, free jazz, smooth jazz, Latin jazz, Afrocuban jazz, Afrobrazilian jazz, funk, soul jazz, fusion, blues, and bossa nova. The category also embraces jazz subgenres that blend cultural influences, such as world fusion, salsa, merengue, mambo, samba, danzón, and contemporary experimental jazz.

Loud Artist of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in recorded music within the broad spectrum of heavy and high-intensity genres. Eligible styles include, but are not limited to, metal (and its subgenres such as thrash, death, black, doom, sludge, and progressive metal), hardcore (including post-hardcore and metalcore), punk (such as hardcore punk, crust punk, and melodic punk), noise rock, industrial, screamo, grindcore, and other genres characterized by loud, aggressive, or intense sonic expression.

Pop Artist of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in recorded music across the pop genres. These can include but are not limited to: Dance-pop, dream-pop, Electropop, Ambient pop, bubblegum pop, Contemporary pop, mainstream pop, afrobeats, adult contemporary, bollywood, K-pop, J-pop, Cantopop, orchestral pop, middle-of-the-road, top 40, dance.

R&B Artist of the Year - This award recognizes exceptional achievement in Rhythm and Blues and its subgenres, including contemporary R&B, neo-soul, alternative R&B, funk, soul, gospel-influenced R&B, and trap soul. The award celebrates artists who honor R&B's heritage while innovating through contemporary production and songwriting, showcasing technical excellence and authentic expression.

Rap/Hip-Hop Artist of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in recorded music across the landscape of rap and hip-hop. Eligible styles include, but are not limited to, trap, boom bap, gangsta rap, freestyle rap, mumble rap, melodic rap, crunk, grime, drill, alternative hip-hop, conscious rap, lo-fi hip-hop, experimental hip-hop, and regional or fusion styles such as dancehall, alté, and reggaetón-infused rap.

Rock Artist of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in recorded music across the wide spectrum of rock genres. These can include but are not limited to: alternative rock, garage rock, glam rock, hard rock, punk rock, indie rock, progressive rock, psychedelic rock, roots rock, southern rock, surf rock, classic rock, grunge, shoegaze, noise rock, math rock, post-rock, post-punk, new wave, folk rock, blues rock, soft rock, and experimental rock.

PLEASE NOTE: MusicNL supports all genres equally and encourages members from other non-listed genres to contact programs@musicnl.ca to discuss submitting a new genre. In doing so, members can create a new category for their genre pending having enough eligible releases in said category.

INDUSTRY AWARD CRITERIA AND CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

Industry Award nominees are submitted through the MusicNL website, and then selected by a committee of Newfoundland and Labrador music industry professionals. A single award is presented in each category. If a MusicNL member is interested in suggesting a nominee for these awards please contact programs@musicnl.ca

Artist Manager of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in artist management within the Newfoundland and Labrador music industry during the eligibility period. The recipient demonstrates outstanding leadership, business acumen, and dedication in advancing their clients' careers through strategic planning, networking, and advocacy. The ideal candidate has successfully secured opportunities for their artists, effectively negotiated contracts, built strong industry relationships, and shown innovation in navigating the evolving music landscape. Evidence of tangible results such as increased bookings, expanded audience reach, enhanced revenue streams, or career milestones achieved under their management is required.

Event of the Year -This award recognizes a live, in-person event held during the eligibility period that prominently features musical performances from artists based in Newfoundland and Labrador. Eligible events must take place within the province and may include recurring or limited-run concert series, annual festivals, or one-time events that have made a significant impact on the local music scene. Applicants will be required to provide details on the event’s overall contribution to the provincial music community including the programming, participating artists, and audience reach.

Graphic Artist of the Year – This award recognizes the contribution of a visual artist with graphic design, artwork and/or album photography to the development of artists or groups in the NL industry during eligibility period. At least one sample of work is required.

Industry Professional of the Year – These award categories recognize the outstanding contribution of a music industry professional from any field of the music industry such as, promoters, publicist, event producers etc. Members who have won this award twice in the past three years are not eligible to apply.

Media Person of the Year – This award recognizes the outstanding support from an individual from the media (broadcasting, publishing, podcast etc.) in the promotion of Newfoundland and Labrador artists. The award goes to the individual. Members who have won this award twice in the past three years are not eligible to apply.

Music Educator of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in music education in Newfoundland and Labrador. The award goes to an individual and not to music studios or schools of music. Applicants are encouraged to submit letters of support or audiovisual feedback from students. Members who have won this award twice in the past three years are not eligible to apply.

Outstanding Company of the Year – This award recognizes the outstanding contribution of a company to the development of the music industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. Members who have won this award twice in the past three years are not eligible to apply.

Recording Engineer/Producer of the Year – This award recognizes excellence in producing and sound engineering in Newfoundland and Labrador. To qualify, applicants must submit three (3) songs that were released in the eligibility period that they were credited for.

Venue of the Year – This award recognizes a club, soft seat theatre, arena, or any venue that features live Newfoundland and Labrador performances. The venue must be located in Newfoundland and Labrador. Venues who have won this award twice in the past three years are not eligible to apply.

Volunteer of the Year – This award recognizes an individual who has made a difference in the Newfoundland and Labrador music industry through volunteering. Members who have won this award twice in the past three years are not eligible to apply.

SUBMISSION ADJUDICATION AND MEMBERSHIP VOTING

Submission Period Ends: Submission for Award and Stages applications closes.

Initial Review Phase: MusicNL staff reviews all submitted applications to ensure they meet the specific eligibility requirements for their applicable categories.

Qualification Assessment: Applications are screened to ensure they contain all required materials and comply with category-specific criteria.

Jury Selection Process: MusicNL assembles a diverse panel of industry experts as jurors. Our jurors represent key industry roles such as: producers, established artists, music educators, representatives from various music organizations and many other qualified participants.

Jury Assignment: Qualified applications are distributed to the relevant jury members for evaluation.

Evaluation Period: Jurors independently assess each application based on the established criteria relevant to each category.

Final Nominee Selection: MusicNL staff tallies jury scores and, based on the score, selects a minimum of three (3) to a maximum of six (6) nominees for each category. In the event of a tie in the score, the tied applicants are both nominated.

Announcement of Nominees: Following the jury process, nominees are announced at a MusicNL press conference.

Member Voting: MusicNL members vote for their choice in each category. The vote is weighted as follows:

- Individual & Student – one (1) vote per award
- Duo – two (2) votes per award
- Non-Profit, Business, and Venue – four (4) votes per award
- Group Memberships – four (4) votes per award
- The Fans' Choice Awards Entertainer of the Year is decided by public vote

Final Winner Selection: MusicNL staff tallies the jurors' scores along with the MusicNL membership votes. The final score is made up of 75% of the jury score and 25% of the membership vote.