

2026

Better Newspaper Contest

Digital Entries



Nebraska Press Association

**Nebraska Press Association
2026 Better Newspaper Digital Contest
Early Bird Deadline: Friday, January 16th, 2026**

(All newspapers with entries submitted before midnight January 16th, 2026 will be entered in a drawing for a free convention registration for that newspaper valued at: \$250)

Regular Deadline: Friday, January 30th, 2026

NEW Class Divisions

Division A

Newspapers Publishing 1x-2x per week
(according to 2025 Statements of Ownership)

Division B

Newspapers Publishing 3x-7x per week
(according to 2025 Statements of Ownership)

Division C

Flatwater Free Press, Nebraska Examiner, Lincoln Journal Star, Omaha World-Herald

Deadlines

Entries must be entered online by **Midnight on January 30th, 2026**. Early bird deadline is midnight, January 16, 2026.

Contest Period

Calendar Year 2025. All entries must have been originally published between January 1 and December 31, 2025.

NOTICE

Divisions A + B: Entry Fee is \$4.00 per entry from December 1-January 16; \$5 per entry from January 17-30.

Division C: Entry Fee is \$30.00 per entry from December 1-January 30.

Payment methods: Check or online payment.

Mail check to:

**Nebraska Press Association
845 "S" Street
Lincoln, NE 68508**

Pay online at:

<https://nebpress.com/nebraska-press-association-payment-form/>

General Rules:

1. Entries accepted only from dues-paying members.
2. Entries must be submitted to www.newspapercontest.com/nebraska by Midnight, Central time on Friday, January 30. Follow the onscreen instructions and register using your information. You will be asked for an “Association Code”, please enter **NE2026**. Please be sure to read all online rules for each category. If you need clarification of the rules, contact Lynne Lance at lynne@nebpress.com or call 850-542-7087. Entries must be submitted online, as specified.
3. Semi-weeklies are considered weeklies.
4. Any class in a category that has less than 4 entries will be moved up to the next circulation class. First, second, and third place winners will be awarded in all categories having qualified entries.
5. All entries may be entered only once, regardless of publication or circulation category.
6. Individual staffers may win multiple awards in the same contest category, provided each entry is clearly marked with the staffer’s name. Entry must have been created by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member.
7. Cover letters are not to be included with entries.

Digital:

49. Web Sites

To enter include the address of Web Site and name(s) of staff responsible for site. Criteria includes usefulness to readers, effectiveness of advertising, quality and quantity of community content, ease of navigation, inclusion of special features such as links, interaction, etc., and cross-promotion of newspaper and Web Site. Maximum one entry per newspaper.

50. Online Video - Advertising

Advertising, promotional and other styles of non-editorial video are eligible. Judges shall consider quality of visual messaging, graphics, sound, special effects and quality of script, camerawork and editing. Premium for uniqueness and viewer impact. Newspaper must keep link active to entry on their respective website until judging is complete. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

51. Online Video - Editorial

Breaking news, sports, features, special interest and other styles of video are eligible. Judges shall consider quality of visual storytelling, graphics, sound, special effects and quality of script, camerawork, and editing. Premium for uniqueness and viewer impact. Newspaper must keep link active to entry on their respective website until judging is complete. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

52. Online Coverage of Breaking News

Entry consists of permanent link to digital content of the breaking news. Judges will consider the newspaper's use of multi-media to break a spot news story and develop the coverage as the news event unfolds. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

53. Best Use of Social Media

This category recognizes newspapers that have utilized social media in an innovative way to expand coverage beyond traditional print. Entry should include up to three examples (screen shots of Facebook posts, tweets, etc.). Judges will consider the entry's impact on the audience, clarity of the message and creativity. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

54. Best Digital Ad Idea

Any ad – animated or static – appearing on website or mobile site. Ad must have been created locally by newspaper entering it in the contest. Entry consists of permanent link to digital content. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

55. Best Sports Video

Capturing magic on the gridiron or inside gymnasium, moments caught on video capture clicks and views on newspaper websites. Submit your best sports video. Videos will be judged based on the uniqueness of the subject matter, how the video was

packaged and the impact of the moment captured. Maximum two entries per newspaper.

56. Investigative Journalism – Class C Only

This category honors a single or a series of stories that uncover major news based on the reporters' own investigations that advance and serve the public interest. Clear presentation through user interface and interactivity, creative use of the medium and platforms (including mobile), use of social tools and evidence of the impact of the publication will be considered. Judges will also consider the impact of the work through subsequent coverage, conversations or resulting policy changes. An entry will consist of a single piece, series or package on the same subject, including a one paragraph summary detailing the investigation's impact. An entry may consist of up to five examples, including articles, blog posts, videos, graphics, podcasts, etc.

57. Excellence in Newsletters – Class C Only

This category honors email newsletters that serve as a conduit to delivering news and information. Entries should showcase a unique voice, whether the newsletter is issued by an individual or organization. Entries may span the increasingly wide array of newsletter formats, such as providing a digest of news or events, curating resources, sharing ideas or opinions from individual columnists, providing insight on topical issues or containing original reporting and exclusive content. Submitters should make note of any visual elements that regularly accompany stories and/or provide context. Entries may consist of daily, weekly or other regularly delivered offerings (and we all miss an issue or two, there is no penalty for a reasonable number of gaps). Judges will consider quality of writing, design, frequency, length of content based on the material, subject matter and overall strategy and impact of the newsletter. This award honors a single newsletter published under the same brand. Entrants may include up to five URLs linking to examples or archives of your single newsletter.

58. Breaking News – Class C Only

This category honors digital coverage throughout an unplanned breaking or developing news event. Judges will weigh evidence of exceptional journalism, quality of writing, use of other media and creative use of digital and mobile platforms under deadline pressure. All work submitted must have been produced within 72 hours of the originating news event.

59. Digital Video Storytelling – Class C Only

This award honors innovative work in telling stories through digital video, including animation. Judges will consider the distinction of presentation, how the work incorporates digital storytelling techniques and is unique to digital platforms and the impact of the journalism produced. Attention will also be paid to innovative use of digital video, and creativity used to tell stories on digital, mobile and social platforms. Entries may be submitted in one of the following subcategories:

- *Social Media*: Videos that are featured on social media platforms and are less than three minutes in length individually. May submit up to 3 videos total as a package.
- *Short Form*: A single video that runs 10 minutes or less.
- *Long Form*: A single video that runs longer than 10 minutes.
- *Series*: Three-five videos of any length within a series. There is no time limit placed on videos in the series.

60. Explanatory Reporting – Class C Only

This award honors excellence in sustained and ongoing explanatory journalism through digital means. Entries should cover a planned, significant news event or topic over a sustained period of time, and explain the relevance and impact of a subject or event to audiences through storytelling and presentation. Entries should showcase the ongoing and continued coverage of the event or topic and how the organization explained the issue and engaged audiences.

61. Feature – Class C Only

This award honors excellence in online journalism presented in a single package or story that shows significant depth, insight and new understanding of a story or topic. Entries may be presented as profiles or feature packages. Judges will consider the use of social tools to coalesce a participatory, online community around the topic being covered; the quality of the journalism; the digital production and design of the coverage; and the ways in which multiple platforms, including social and mobile, were used to reach, inform and engage with the audience.

Digital Sweepstakes Awards

Weekly Class Awards

All **weekly** newspapers entered are automatically eligible. The award will be presented to the newspaper in each class of A, B and C that accumulates the most points in its class based on the formula given below.

Weekly Sweepstakes Award

Newspapers published 1x-2x per week are automatically eligible. This is the most prestigious award in the weekly digital competition. The award will be presented to the newspaper that accumulates the most points based on the formula given below.

Daily Sweepstakes Award

Newspapers published 3x-7x per week entered are automatically eligible. The award will be presented to the newspaper that accumulates the most points based on the following formula:

Each first place award...10 points*

Each second place award...8 points*

Each third place award...6 points*

Class C Sweepstakes Award

Newsrooms entered in Class C are automatically eligible. The award will be presented to the newspaper that accumulates the most points based on the following formula:

Each first place award...10 points*

Each second place award...8 points*

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