

DATE: July 1, 2026

TO: CALAFCO Members, LAFCO Commissioners and Staff,
Other Interested Organizations

FROM: Michelle McIntyre - CALAFCO Executive Director,
CALAFCO Achievement Awards Committee, CALAFCO Board of Directors

SUBJECT: 2026 CALAFCO Achievement Award Nominations Period Open

DEADLINE: Friday, August 28, 2026, by 5:00 p.m.

Qualifying Period: August 16, 2025 through August 15, 2026

On behalf of the Association, I am pleased to announce that the nomination period for the 2026 CALAFCO Achievement Awards is now open.

Each year, CALAFCO recognizes individuals and organizations from across the state for their work advancing the mission and responsibilities of LAFCOs. This year's program retains its established structure with targeted updates to better reflect the breadth of work being done across the LAFCO community, including emerging leadership, partnerships, project-based accomplishments, community impact, and discretionary recognition of exceptional efforts that may not fit neatly into existing categories.

We encourage you to nominate individuals and organizations whose work reflects strong performance, meaningful collaboration, and measurable results. Early submittal is encouraged.

*Before submitting a nomination, please carefully review the nomination instructions and the criteria for each category. **Incomplete nominations, or those that do not follow the submission guidelines, will not be considered.***

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS NOMINATION PROCEDURE

1. Most nominations may be made by an individual, a LAFCO, a CALAFCO Associate Member, or any other organization.
2. Each nomination must meet the specific award category criteria for consideration.
3. With the exception of the Lifetime Achievement Award, all nominated projects or acts of service must have occurred or been completed during the qualifying period of August 16, 2025, through August 15, 2026.

4. Nominations must be submitted with a completed nomination form. A separate form is required for each nomination.
5. Nomination Executive Summaries must be limited to no more than 250 words. Nomination Summaries must be limited to no more than 1,000 words or two (2) pages.
6. All supporting information (e.g., reports, articles) must be submitted with the nomination. Total supporting documentation, including any letters of support or endorsement, is limited to no more than three (3) pages.
7. Support or Endorsement Letters: Nominations may optionally include letters of support or endorsement from individuals or organizations familiar with the nominee's work. Letters should provide specific examples of contributions and impact. A maximum of two (2) letters may be submitted, each not to exceed one (1) page. Letters must be included at the time of submittal and count toward the three-page supporting documentation limit. The quality and relevance of the nomination will be given greater weight than the number of letters submitted.
8. All materials must be submitted at one time. No late nominations will be accepted — no exceptions.
9. Electronic submittals are required and must be submitted as a single PDF document.
10. Nominations and all supporting materials must be received no later than Friday, August 28, 2026.

Submit nominations electronically as a single PDF to:

Michelle McIntyre, CALAFCO Executive Director
mmcintyre@calafco.org | (916) 442-6536

AWARDS COMMITTEE FLEXIBILITY

Number of Awards: The Awards Committee may, at its discretion, select more than one recipient in a category when multiple nominations are deemed equally deserving.

Category Assignment: The Awards Committee may reassign a nomination to a different award category if it determines the nomination better aligns with the criteria of that category. The Committee's determination is final.

General: Submission of a nomination does not guarantee that an award will be given in that category. Not all categories are required to be awarded each year.

CALAFCO ACHIEVEMENT AWARD CATEGORIES

Nomination & Selection Criteria



Every year, CALAFCO recognizes excellence within the LAFCO community by presenting Achievement Awards at the Annual Conference. Nominations are accepted until Friday, August 28, 2026, in the following categories:

EXISTING CATEGORIES

OUTSTANDING CALAFCO VOLUNTEER

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes a CALAFCO volunteer who has provided exemplary service during the year. Exemplary service clearly goes above and beyond what is asked or expected in the charge of their responsibilities. This category may include a CALAFCO Board member, regional officer, program volunteer, or any other requested volunteer.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nominee must have volunteered for the Association during the year in which the nomination is being made.
- Nominee does not have to be a CALAFCO member.
- Volunteer efforts must demonstrate going above and beyond what was asked or expected, with positive and effective results.
- Nominee can be a CALAFCO Board member, regional officer, program volunteer, or any other volunteer.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria requirements for consideration.
- Equal consideration shall be given to each nominee, regardless of position or role. Only contributions and outcomes shall be considered.
- The extent of volunteerism and overall impact on the statewide Association and membership shall be considered.
- Preference may be given to individuals who have not previously received this award and meet all required criteria.

OUTSTANDING CALAFCO ASSOCIATE MEMBER

AWARD SUMMARY:

Presented to an active CALAFCO Associate Member (person or agency) that has advanced or promoted the cause of LAFCOs by consistently producing distinguished work that upholds the mission and goals of LAFCOs, has helped elevate the role and mission of LAFCOs through its work, and demonstrates a collaborative approach to LAFCO stakeholder engagement.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nominee must be a CALAFCO Associate Member in good standing.
- Nominee shall have been an Associate Member for the full year in which the nomination is being made, and for at least one year prior.
- The nominee may be an individual within an Associate Member firm or agency.
- Nominee shall demonstrate that through their work, the role and mission of LAFCO have been upheld and furthered.
- Nominee must have demonstrated cooperative and collaborative approaches to situations affecting LAFCOs state wide.
- Proven commitment to the Association's membership through volunteering time and resources during the year in which the nomination is made.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Equal consideration shall be given to all nominees meeting the nominating criteria.
- The level of volunteering time and resources to the Association shall be a consideration.

OUTSTANDING COMMISSIONER

AWARD SUMMARY:

Presented to an individual Commissioner for extraordinary service to their Commission. Extraordinary service is considered actions above and beyond those required to fulfill statutory responsibilities as a Commissioner, including consistently demonstrating independent judgment on behalf of the entire county, developing innovative and collaborative solutions to local issues, and leading the commission and community by example.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nominee must be a Commissioner of a LAFCO in good standing with the Association.
- Nominee shall be a Commissioner for the full year in which the nomination is being made.
- Proven demonstration of consistently exercising independent judgment for the greater good of the County is required.
- Proven leadership through collaborative, innovative, and creative solutions to local issues is required.
- Proven effective results and outcomes shall be demonstrated in the nomination.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Equal consideration shall be given to all nominees meeting the nominating criteria. Representation type and LAFCO size shall not be a consideration.
- The overall impact of the Commissioner's leadership shall be considered.
- Preference may be given to individuals who have not previously received this award and meet all required criteria.

OUTSTANDING LAFCO PROFESSIONAL

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes an Executive Officer, Staff Analyst, Clerk, Legal Counsel, or any other LAFCO staff person for exemplary service during the past year. Exemplary service is considered actions that clearly go above and beyond what is asked, expected, or required in the charge of their LAFCO responsibilities.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nominee must be a staff person of a LAFCO in good standing with the Association.
- Nominee shall be a staff person for the full year in which the nomination is being made.
- Nominee can be either an employee of the LAFCO or a contractor providing employee-type services.
- Efforts must be demonstrated showing the individual has consistently gone above and beyond their role, with proven results that otherwise would not have occurred.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Equal consideration shall be given to all nominees. Position within a LAFCO and the size or geographic area of the LAFCO shall not be considerations.
- The overall impact of the LAFCO professional on their LAFCO and the greater community shall be considered.
- Preference may be given to individuals who have not previously received this award.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes any individual who has made extraordinary contributions to the statewide LAFCO community in terms of longevity of service, exemplary advocacy of LAFCO-related legislation, proven leadership, and demonstrated support in developing and implementing innovative and creative ways to support the goals of LAFCOs throughout California. The nominee should have a substantial and sustained record of involvement with the LAFCO community

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nomination must be received from a member of LAFCO or an Associate Member in good standing.
- The nominee should have a long record of involvement with the LAFCO community.
- During that time, the nominee shall have a proven positive impact and effect on the support and evolution of LAFCOs statewide.
- Includes advocacy through legislation, developing creative and innovative solutions serving beyond their LAFCO, collaborative stakeholder approaches, and support for fellow members of the LAFCO community.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Preference may be given to nominees who have also proven experience volunteering for CALAFCO through regional officer roles, committees, or the CALAFCO Board.

LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR

AWARD SUMMARY:

Presented to a member of the California State Senate or Assembly in recognition of leadership and valued contributions in support of LAFCO goals that have a statewide effect. The recipient shall have demonstrated clear support and effort to further the cause and ability of LAFCOs to fulfill their statutory mission and selected by the CALAFCO Board by a super majority.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nominee shall be a California State legislator during the full year in which the nomination is made.
- Nominee must have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in the Legislature on behalf of LAFCOs statewide, with efforts resulting in a positive impact for all LAFCOs.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- The Achievement Awards Committee shall forward all nominations to the Board for consideration.
- Selection requires a supermajority approval of the Board present at the time of the vote.

MIKE GOTCH EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

AWARD SUMMARY:

Awarded to an individual, group, or agency for actions that rise above expected or common functions; reduce or eliminate common institutional roadblocks; and result in a truly extraordinary public service outcome. Individuals, a LAFCO, or collaborative efforts among multiple LAFCOs or a LAFCO with other entities are eligible. This award has two distinct categories:

1. Protection of agricultural and open space lands and prevention of sprawl
2. Innovation, collaboration, outreach, and effective support of the evolution and viability of local agencies and promotion of efficient and effective delivery of municipal services

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Clear demonstration that the actions rise above expected or common functions.
- The actions reduced or eliminated common institutional roadblocks.
- The actions clearly prove a truly extraordinary public service outcome that is systemic and sustainable.
- Identified unique circumstances and factors leading to the solution or project.
- The innovative steps taken to solve the problem or take action.
- Clear description of the results and outcomes, including short- and long-term effects.

- How this work can be promoted as a LAFCO best practice.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Equal consideration shall be given to each nominee within each category. LAFCO size or geographic area shall not be a consideration.
- The overall impact of the actions and outcomes on the greater community shall be considered.

NEW CATEGORIES 2026

EMERGING LEADER – COMMISSIONER

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes a LAFCO Commissioner who, early in their service, has demonstrated strong engagement, sound judgment, and a clear commitment to the work of the Commission. This award acknowledges the value of fresh perspectives and early leadership in shaping effective governance.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Must be a Commissioner of a LAFCO in good standing with the Association.
- Must have served generally no more than five (5) years as a LAFCO Commissioner.
- Demonstrates active, engaged participation in Commission work during the qualifying period.
- Shows initiative and sound judgment in Commission proceedings.
- Demonstrates early leadership through meaningful contributions to Commission outcomes.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Level of engagement and initiative demonstrated during the qualifying period.
- Quality and impact of contributions to Commission work.
- Potential for continued leadership and growth within the LAFCO community.

EMERGING LEADER – STAFF

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes a LAFCO staff member who has demonstrated initiative, reliability, and meaningful contributions early in their career. This award celebrates the next generation of LAFCO professionals who are building the foundation for sustained excellence in local agency governance.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Must be LAFCO staff (employee or contractor providing employee-type services) of a LAFCO in good standing.
- Must have served generally no more than five (5) years in a LAFCO staff capacity.
- Demonstrates initiative and reliability in their work during the qualifying period.

- Contributes meaningfully to LAFCO projects or operations beyond what is minimally expected.
- Shows willingness to take on additional responsibilities and learn.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Level of initiative and professionalism demonstrated.
- Impact of contributions relative to experience and role.
- Potential for continued growth and contribution to the LAFCO profession.

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes a LAFCO-led or LAFCO-supported project or initiative that demonstrates strong execution, clear purpose, and measurable results. This award highlights the importance of project-based work in delivering on LAFCO's statutory mission.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- May be submitted by a single LAFCO or as a collaborative effort among multiple entities.
- Must have been completed or reached a significant milestone during the qualifying period.
- Clearly defines the issue or need addressed by the project.
- Describes the approach, steps taken, and resources involved.
- Demonstrates measurable and verifiable results.
- Advances LAFCO responsibilities and objectives in a meaningful way.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Effectiveness and quality of execution.
- Significance and sustainability of outcomes.
- Value as a model or best practice for other LAFCOs.
- Overall impact on the community or communities served.

GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY, OR PUBLIC PARTNER AWARD

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes a public agency, community association, stakeholder group, nonprofit, or other entity that has worked effectively with a LAFCO and contributed to a successful outcome. This award acknowledges that strong LAFCO work often depends on genuine partnerships beyond the Commission itself.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Nominee must not be a LAFCO.

- Must have worked collaboratively with a LAFCO during the qualifying period.
- Demonstrates a constructive, solution-oriented approach to the partnership.
- Made a clear and demonstrable contribution to a LAFCO process or outcome.
- Demonstrates clear and tangible results from the partnership or engagement.
- May include cities, counties, special districts, associations, chambers of commerce, nonprofits, or other stakeholder groups.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Strength, quality, and depth of the partnership or engagement.
- Impact on governance, service delivery, or community outcomes.
- Value as a model for collaborative LAFCO engagement.

EQUITY AND COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

AWARD SUMMARY:

Recognizes efforts that improve access to services, address identified service gaps, or advance equitable outcomes through LAFCO-related work. This award reflects CALAFCO's commitment to ensuring that LAFCO's mission serves all communities, particularly those that have historically faced barriers to adequate services.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- May be a LAFCO, individual, collaborative effort, or other entity as appropriate.
- The work must have occurred during the qualifying period.
- Clearly identifies a service need, gap, or equity concern.
- Describes the specific actions taken to address the identified need.
- Demonstrates measurable or clearly defined outcomes.
- Aligns with LAFCO responsibilities and statutory mission.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Must meet all nomination criteria for consideration.
- Level and breadth of community impact.
- Effectiveness and appropriateness of the approach taken.
- Sustainability and durability of results.
- Clarity and verifiability of outcomes.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD (DISCRETIONARY)

AWARD SUMMARY:

The President's Award is a discretionary award that allows CALAFCO to recognize an exceptional effort, contribution, achievement, or individual who does not fit neatly within the existing award categories. This award exists to ensure that truly remarkable accomplishments are not overlooked simply because they fall outside predefined boundaries. The award is discretionary and is not expected to be presented annually. Its use should reflect a genuine exception rather than routine recognition.

CRITERIA:

- May be awarded to an individual, organization, collaborative effort, or other nominee determined appropriate by the Board Chair.
- The contribution, achievement, or effort must be clearly exceptional in nature.
- The nominee should represent circumstances, accomplishments, or contributions that are not adequately recognized through an existing CALAFCO award category.
- Any Board member may submit a nomination to the Board Chair for consideration.

SELECTION:

- The Board Chair, in consultation with the Executive Director, determines whether to advance a nomination to the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee shall ratify the recipient by a supermajority vote.
- The recommendation presented to the Executive Committee shall include a clear explanation of why the nominee does not fit within an existing award category and why the recognition merits special consideration.

Note on the President's Award

Because this award is discretionary, a standard nomination form is not required. However, any nomination or recommendation for this award should include a written explanation of the exceptional contribution and a clear statement of why it falls outside existing categories.

QUALIFYING PERIOD

Except for the Lifetime Achievement Award, all nominated projects or acts of service must have occurred or been completed between August 16, 2025, and August 15, 2026.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. 2026 Achievement Awards Nomination Form
- B. Listing of Prior Achievement Award Recipients